

# THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

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## Half Hour Meditations on Romans

No. 1

*Some of our readers will recall that a number of articles in exposition of the Epistle to the Romans were published in this journal, during the years 1929-1933.*

*From time to time since, brethren in various parts of the world have urged the resumption of this series. Only recently we were advised that some are contemplating Class studies in this Epistle, rightly understanding that in "The Gospel according to Paul," as the Epistle to the Romans is justly called, the answers are to be found to the many questions now being raised on the important doctrines of Justification and Sanctification. These brethren urge, not only that the series be resumed, but also that the earlier articles, many of which are out of print, be republished for their benefit.*

*In adopting these suggestions, which have the unanimous approval of our Directors and Editorial Committee, it will be the writer's thought to condense and summarize some of the earlier articles, where this may be possible without weakening the exposition.*

THERE can be no question, as an able expositor has said, that "When the Epistle to the Romans appeared for the first time it was to the church a word in season." Since that time it has played a powerful part in every great spiritual revival the church as known. The Great Reformation owed its birth and development to this Epistle more perhaps than to any other portion of the Bible. "Luther, in his famous preface, says: This Epistle is the chief book of the New Testament, the purest gospel. It deserves not only to be known word for word by every Christian but to be the subject of his meditation day by day, the daily bread of his soul. . . . The more time one spends on it, the more precious it becomes and the better it appears. Melancthon, in order to make it perfect his own, copied it twice with his own hand. It is the book he expounded most frequently in his lectures" (Godet).

Believing that the present time is one to which the teaching of this Epistle is peculiarly suited, this series of articles is purposed in the prayerful hope that they too in their measure may prove to be to the readers of this Journal a word in season.

## Seekers After Righteousness

Let none be discouraged from the study of this Epistle by the fact that it contains things "hard to be understood." While it is true that the most mature Christian minds will find themselves at times face to face with the unfathomable ("O, the depth!" Rom. 11:33), yet there is milk to be had here for the veriest babe in Christ. On the other hand, let no one for a moment suppose that by intellectually grasping the philosophy of God's plan presented herein he will have thereby exhausted the Apostles' intention. No! The prominent idea of the Epistle is the offer of the "righteousness of God" to one who finds himself stripped of his own righteousness. Since this is so, it necessarily follows that the condition of heart likely to profit most from the Apostles' precepts is that enjoined by our Lord in his Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6).

Such will find themselves filled indeed by the blessed assurances found in the Epistle to the Romans.

## Time, Place, and Occasion

Before considering the Epistle itself, it will be helpful in understanding its lessons to have in mind the circumstances under which it came to be written.

Without going into disputed questions, it will be enough for our present purpose to note that "The four books of the New Testament known as Letters to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians are allowed by practically all critics, including some of the most destructive, to be genuine productions of the Apostle Paul. . . . The date generally assigned to the Roman Letter is 58 A. D. (*Weymouth*).

One expositor, H. C. G. Moule, whose scholarly writings contain a large measure of the spirit of devotion to our Savior, has arranged such data as are available in an interesting way and presents a beautiful word picture of the Apostle and the conditions under which he wrote. It cannot fail to greatly assist us as we approach the study of this Epistle in the same spirit. We quote: "It is the month of February in the year of Christ 58. In a room in the house of Gaius, a wealthy Corinthian Christian, Paul the Apostle addressed himself to write to the converts of the mission at Rome. Tertius, his amanuensis, is at his side.

"The great world meanwhile is rolling on its way. It is the fourth year of Nero. He is consul the third time, with Valerius Messala for his colleague. Poppaea has lately caught the unworthy prince in the net of her bad influence. Domitius Corbulo has just resumed the war with Parthia and prepared to penetrate the highlands of Armenia. In a few weeks, in the full spring, an Egyptian impostor is about to inflame Jerusalem with his Messianic claim. He will lead four thousand fanatics into the desert and return to the city with a host of thirty thousand men, only to be totally routed by the legionaries of Felix.

"The Apostle is about to close his three months' stay at Corinth. He has heard of plots against his life and will in prudence decline the more direct route from Cenchrea by sea and strike northward for Philippi and thence over the Aegæan to Troas. He must visit Jerusalem before June if possible for he has by him the Greek collections to deliver to the poor converts there. Then in the vista of his further movements he sees Rome; with a certain apprehension yet with longing hope he thinks about life and witness there.

"Phoebe, a Greek Christian woman is about to visit the city. He must commend this ministrant of

the mission at Cenchrea to the Roman brethren. A deliberate letter to them is suggested by this personal need.

"His thoughts have long gravitated to the City of the World. At Ephesus not many months before he had purposed in the spirit to visit Jerusalem; with an emphasis his biographer remembered he had said, I must also see Rome (Acts 19:21). In the sense of a Divine decree his I *must* had written this journey down in the plan of his life. He was assured too by circumstantial and perhaps by supernatural signs that he had now no more place in these parts (Rom. 15:23), that is in the eastern Roman world where all his labor hitherto had been spent. The Lord in former days had shut Paul up to a track which led him through Asia Minor to the Aegaeon and across the Aegaeon to Europe (Acts 16). Now he prepared to guide him by paths which his servant knew not: from Eastern Europe to Western, and before all things to the City.

### **Prayer for Others Deepens Our Interest in Them**

"Amongst these providential preparations was a growing occupation of the Apostles thought with persons and interests in the Christian circle there.

Here was Phoebe, about to take ship for Italy. In the great Capital the beloved and faithful Aquila and Prisca were now resident again, no longer excluded by the Claudian edict. We may fairly conclude they were already the central influence in the mission. Their first days dated perhaps from the Pentecost itself, when Roman strangers saw and heard the wonders and message of that hour (Acts 2:10). At Rome other believers personally known to Paul lived, drawn by unrecorded circumstances to the Center of the World.

His well beloved Epaphroditus was there; Mary who had at times tried hard to help him; Andronicus and Junias and Herodian, his relatives; Amphilius and Stachys, men very dear to him; Urbanus, who had worked for Christ at his side; Rufus, no common Christian in his esteem; Rufus mother, who had once watched over Paul with a mother's love. All these rise before him as he thinks of Phoebe and her arrival and the faces and hands that at his appeal would welcome her in the Lord. . . ." Besides, he has been hearing about the actual state of that all important mission. As all roads led to Rome, so all roads led from Rome. There were Christian travelers everywhere who could tell him how the Gospel fared among the metropolitan brethren (Acts 1:8). As he heard of them so he prayed for them, without ceasing (Acts 1:9).

He made request for himself too, now definitely and urgently that his way might be opened to visit them at last.

"Praying for others, if the prayer is prayer indeed and is based to some extent on knowledge, is a sure way to deepen our interest in them and our sympathetic insight into their hearts and conditions. From the human side nothing more than these tidings and these prayers was needed to draw from St. Paul a written message to be placed in Phoebe's care. From this same human side again, when he once addressed himself to write, there were circumstances of thought and action that would naturally give direction to his message.

### **Sound Doctrine Important**

"He stood amidst circumstances most significant and suggestive in matter of Christian *truth*. Quite recently his Judaist rivals had invaded the congregations of Galatia and had led the impulsive converts there to quit what seemed their firm grasp on the truth of justification by faith only. To St. Paul this was no mere battle of abstract definitions, nor again was it a matter of

merely local importance. The success of the alien teachers in Galatia showed him that the same specious mischiefs might win their way more or less quickly anywhere. What would such success mean? It would mean the loss of the joy of the Lord and the strength of that joy in the misguided churches.

Justification by faith meant nothing less than *Christ all in all*, literally all in all for sinful mans pardon and acceptance. It meant a profound simplicity of personal reliance altogether upon him before the fiery holiness of eternal Law. It meant an intense and unanxious look out and up from the virtues and the guilt of man to the mighty merits of the Savior. The foundation fact of salvation secured that the process should be from its beginning not humanitarian but Divine. To discredit *that* would not merely disturb the order of a missionary community. It would hurt the vitals of the Christian soul, tingeing with impure elements the mountain springs of the peace of God.

Fresh as he was now from combating this evil in Galatia, St. Paul would be sure to have it in his thoughts when he turned to Rome. It was only too certain that there his active adversaries would do their worst; probably they were at work already.

### **Christian Conduct of Equal Importance**

"Then, he had been engaged also with the problems of Christian *life* in the mission at Corinth. There the main trouble was less of creed than of conduct. In the Corinthian Epistles we find no great traces of an energetic heretical propaganda but rather a bias in the converts towards a strange license of temper and life.

Perhaps this was even accentuated by a popular logical assent to the truth of justification *taken alone*, isolated from other concurrent truths, tempting the Corinthian to dream that he might continue in sin that grace might abound. If such were his state of spiritual thought, he would encounter (by his own fault) a positive moral danger in the supernatural gifts, which at Corinth about that time seem to have appeared with quite abnormal power. An antinomian theory in the presence of such exaltations would lead the man easily to the conception that he was too free and too rich in the supernatural order to be the servant of common duties and even of common morals.

Thus the Apostles soul would be full of the need of expounding to its depths the vital harmony of the Lords work for the believer and the Lords work in him: the coordination of a free acceptance with both the precept and the possibility of holiness. He must show once for all how the justified are bound to be pure and humble and how they can be so, and what forms of practical dutifulness their life must take. He must make it clear forever that the Ransom which releases also purchases; that the Lords freeman is the Lords property; that the death of the Cross, reckoned as the death of the justified sinner, directly leads to his living union with the Risen One, including a union of will with will. Thus the Christian life if true to itself must be a life of loyalty to every obligation, every relation constituted in Gods providence among men.

The Christian who is not attentive to others, even where their mere prejudices and mistakes are in question, is a Christian who is not a scrupulously loyal citizen recognizing civil order as the will of God.

So is the Christian who in any respect claims to live as he pleases instead of as the bond servant of his Redeemer should live.

## **The Mystery of Jewish Unbelief**

"Another question had been pressing the Apostles mind for years and recently with a special weight. It was the mystery of Jewish unbelief. Who can estimate the pain and greatness of that mystery in the mind of St. Paul. His own conversion taught him patience with his old associates while it must have filled him also with some eager hopes for them. Every deep and self evidencing manifestation of God in a mans soul suggests to him naturally the thought of the glorious things possible in the souls of others.

Why should not the leading Pharisee, now converted, be the signal and the means of the conversion of the Sanhedrin and of the people? But the hard mystery of sin crossed such paths of expectation, and more and more so as the years went on. Judaism outside the church was stubborn and energetically hostile. And within the church, sad and ominous fact, it crept in underground and sprung up in an embittered op position to the central truths. What did all this mean? Where would it end? Had collective Israel sinned beyond pardon and repentance? Had God cast off his people? Did the conduct of these troublers of Galatia, these fiery rioters before the tribunal of Gallio at Corinth mean that all was over for the race of Abraham? The question was agony to Paul; he sought his Lords answer as a thing without which he could not live. That answer was full in his soul when he meditated his letter to Rome and thought of the Judaists there, and also of the loving Jewish friends of his heart there who would read his message when it came.

## **The Apostle Was Gods Pen**

"Thus we venture to describe the possible outward and inward conditions under which the Epistle to the Romans was conceived and written. Well do we recollect that our account is conjectural. But the Epistles wonderful fullness of outline and detail gives such conjectures more than a shadow for basis.

Whatever the Writer saw around him or felt within him, we do not forget that the Epistle was infinitely more than the result of Paul's mind and life; it was and is an oracle of God, a scripture, a revelation of eternal facts and principles by which to live and die.

As such we approach it . . . not only to analyze or explain but to submit and to believe, taking it as not Pauline only but Divine. But then, it is not the less therefore Pauline. This means that both the thought and the circumstances of St. Paul are to be traced and felt in it as truly and as naturally as if we had before us the letter of an Augustine or a Luther or a Pascal.

He who chose the writers of the Holy Scriptures, many men scattered over many ages, used them each in his surroundings and in his character, yet so as to harmonize them all in the Book that while many is one. He used them with the sovereign skill of Deity.

And that skillful use meant that he used their whole circumstances, which he had ordered. They were in deed his amanuenses; nay, I fear not to say they were his pens. But he is such that he can manipulate as his facile implement no mere piece of mechanism, which however subtle and powerful is mechanism still and can never truly cause anything. He can take a human personality made in his own image pregnant, formative, causative in all its living thought, sensibility, and will and can throw it freely upon its task of thinking and expression. And behold! The product will be His: his matter, his thought, his exposition, his Word, living and abiding for ever. "Thus we enter in spirit the Corinthian citizens house in . . . the early Greek spring and find our way invisible, unheard to where Tertius sits with his reed pen and strips of papyrus. Paul is prepared to give him word by word, sentence by sentence this immortal message. Perhaps the corner of the

room is heaped with . . . the implements of the tentmaker. But the Apostle is now the guest of Gaius, . . . the host of the whole church, so we may rather think that for the time this manual toil is intermitted. Do we seem to see the form and face of him who is about to dictate? The mist of time is in our eyes; but we may credibly report that we find a small and much emaciated frame, a face remarkable for its arched brows, wide forehead, and the expressive mobility of the lips. We trace in looks, in manner and tone of utterance, and even in unconscious attitude and action tokens of a mind rich in every faculty; a nature equally strong in energy and in sympathy, made to govern and to win, to will and to love. The man is great and wonderful; a master soul: subtle, wise, and strong. Yet he draws us with pathetic force to his heart, as one who asks and will repay affection.

"As we look on his face we think with awe and gladness that with those same thought tired eyes . . . he has literally seen only twenty years ago, so he will quietly assure us, the risen and glorified JESUS. His work during those twenty years, his innumerable sufferings, above all his spirit of perfect mental and moral sanity (yet of supernatural peace and love) all make his assurance absolutely trustworthy. He is a transfigured man since that sight of Jesus Christ who now dwells in his heart by faith and uses him as the vehicle of his will and work. And now listen. The Lord is speaking through his servant. The scribe is busy with his pen as the message of Christ is uttered through the soul and from the lips of Paul."

- P. L. Read

## Has Judgment Day Begun?

*"God hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." - Acts 17:31.*

BEFORE We attempt any answer to the question, "Has Judgment Day begun?" we wish to Offer a few remarks on the general subject of Judgment Day.

A very vague and indefinite idea prevails in regard to the Day of Judgment. The view generally held is that Christ will come to earth seated upon a great white throne, and that he will summon saint and sinner in rank and file before him, to be judged, amidst great convulsions of nature -- earthquakes, opening graves, rending rocks, and falling mountains; that the trembling sinners will be brought from the depths of everlasting woe to hear their sins rehearsed, only to be returned to an eternal and merciless doom; and that the saints will be brought from heaven to witness the misery and despair of the condemned, to hear again the decision in their, own case, and to return. The entire time supposed to be assigned to this stupendous work of judging billions is a twenty-four hour day.

This is a very crude conception, and is entirely out of harmony with the inspired Word of God. Let us look at a more Scriptural as well as a more reasonable view of the work and the result of the great Judgment Day which, according to our text, God hath appointed.

The term "judgment" signifies more than merely the rendering of a verdict. It includes the idea of a trial, as well as a decision based upon that trial. And this is true not only of the English word judgment but also of the Greek word which it translates.

The term "day," both in the Scriptures and in common usage, though most frequently used to represent a period of twelve or twenty four hours, really specifies any definite or special period of time. Thus, for instance, we speak of Noah's day, Luther's day, Washington's day; and thus in the Bible the entire time of creation is called a day, where we read of "the day that Jehovah God made the earth and the heavens" (Gen. 2:4) -- a long, definite period. Then we read of "the day of temptation in the wilderness" -- forty years (Heb. 3:8, 9); also of the "day of Christ," the "day of judgment," and "His day"; terms applicable to the Millennial Age, in which Messiah will reign over, rule, and judge the world in righteousness, granting trial as well as rendering sentence. Those who will carefully consult a complete concordance of the Bible with reference to the Day of Judgment, and note the kind and amount of work to be accomplished within that period, will soon see the absurdity of the common view of a twelve or twenty-four hour day, and the necessity for giving to the term "day" its wider significance.

The Scriptures make mention of a number of judgment days. Two of these relate to the human race as a whole. Between these two, several others are stated as taking place.

The first of the world's two judgment days was at the beginning, in the Garden of Eden, when the whole human race was judged representatively in Adam, its head. Some have been disposed to resent this judgment, insisting that Adam misrepresented rather than represented them, but God, whose wisdom is infinite, states the contrary to be true.

### **THE WORLD'S SECOND JUDGMENT DAY**

But according to our text, God has appointed a day in the which he "will" judge the world. How can this be? Has God changed his mind? Has he concluded that his decision in the trial of the first man and the general sentence were unjust, too severe, that he now concludes to judge the world individually? No; were such the case, we should have no better guarantee of a just decision in the future trial than in the past. It is not that God considers his decision in the first judgment unjust but that he has provided a redemption from the penalty of the first judgment in order that he may grant another judgment-trial, under more favorable conditions, to the entire race; all having then had experience with sin and its results.

### **WHO WILL BE THE JUDGE?**

We are further informed that when God gives the world this individual trial, it will be under Christ as judge, whom God will thus honor because of his obedience even unto death for our redemption. God has highly exalted him, even to the divine nature, that he may be a Prince and a Savior (Acts 5:31), that he may be able to recover from death and grant judgment (including trial) to all whom he purchased with his own precious blood. Since it is the plain declaration of Scripture that "God has committed all judgment unto the Son," and has given him "all power in heaven and in earth," there is nothing to dread, but on the contrary, there is great cause for rejoicing on the part of all, in looking forward to the judgment Day. The character of the judge is a sufficient guarantee that the judgment will be just and merciful, with due consideration for the infirmities of all, until the willing and obedient are brought back to the original perfection lost in Eden. With this conclusion *all* the prophetic declarations agree. It is written: "With righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity." - Psa. 98:9.

### **BY WHAT LAW WILL THE WORLD BE JUDGED?**

This coming judgment will be on exactly the same principles as the first. The same law of obedience will be presented, with the same reward of life and the same penalty of death. And as the first trial had a beginning, progressed, and culminated in a verdict and sentence, so also will the second; and the sentence will be life to the righteous and death to the unrighteous. The second trial will be more favorable than the first because of the experience gained under the results of the first trial. Unlike the first trial, the second trial will be one in which every man will stand the test for himself alone and not for another. None will then die because of Adam's sin or because of inherited imperfections. It shall no more be said, "The fathers have eaten a sour grape and the children's teeth are set on edge; but he that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge." "The soul that sinneth, it [and not its children] shall die." - Jer. 31:29, 30; Ezek. 18:4.

Under the reign of Christ, mankind will be gradually educated, trained, disciplined, until they reach perfection. And when they have reached perfection, perfect harmony with God will be required, and any who then fall short of perfect obedience will be cut off, being judged unworthy of life. God had a right to demand perfect obedience of Adam, since he was created perfect; and he will demand the same of all men when the great work of restoring them is complete. None will be permitted to have everlasting life who then in the slightest degree fall short of perfection. To fall short of perfection, then, will be to sin willfully against full light and perfect ability.

We do not wish to be understood as ignoring the present responsibility of the world, which every man has, according to the measure of light enjoyed, whether it be much or little, whether it be the light of nature or of revelation. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good," and "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil" (Prov. 15:3; Eccles. 12:14). The good and evil deeds of the present time will receive a just recompense of reward either now or hereafter.

## **JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS**

Between the world's two judgment days discussed foregoing, a period of about six thousand years intervenes. During this long period, God has been selecting two special classes from among men, and specially trying, testing, disciplining, and training them to be his honored instruments during the second of the world's judgment days.

These two classes are respectively designated, by St. Paul as the "house of sons" and the "house of servants" (Heb. 3:5, 6), the former being composed of those overcomers tried and found faithful during the Christian dispensation (the Gospel Age), and the latter being composed of the faithful overcomers who lived before the Christian dispensation. Those who successfully pass the trial for either of these special classes will not come into judgment (including trial) with the world, but will enter upon their reward when the world is coming into its second judgment day. They will be God's agents in the blessing of the world; in giving to men the instruction and training necessary for their final testing and judgment. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" - 1 Cor. 6:2.

The world's second judgment day is immediately preceded by a judgment of the nations, as such. They are to be judged politically, ecclesiastically, and socially. Many Scriptures make this clear. However, while noting these, it is important to bear in mind the difference between national judgment and individual judgment. While the nation is composed of individuals, and individuals are largely responsible for the courses of nations, and must and do suffer greatly in the calamities which befall them; nevertheless the judgment of the world, as individuals, will be distinct from its judgment as nations. The day of individual judgment for the world will be the Millennial Age, as previously noted. Then, under the favorable conditions of the New Covenant, and granted a clear



knowledge of the truth and every possible assistance and incentive to righteousness, all men individually, and not collectively as nations, will be on trial, or judgment, for eternal life.

The judgment of the nations which precedes this individual trial is a judgment of men in their collective capacities. The civil institutions of the world, social, political, religious, have had a long lease of power. And now, as the "Times of the Gentiles" come to a close, they must render up their accounts. And the Lord's judgment, expressed beforehand by the Prophets, is that not one of them will be found worthy of a renewal of that lease or a continuance of life. The decree is that the dominion shall be taken from them and that he whose right it is shall take the Kingdom, and the nations shall be given to him for an inheritance. - Ezek. 21:27; Dan. 7:27; Psa. 2:8; Rev. 2:26, 27.

Let us listen to a few passages from the pen of other Prophets which bear directly on this subject: "Come near, ye nations, to hear, and hearken, ye people . . . for the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies" (Isa. 34:1, 2). Again: "The Lord . . . is an everlasting King; at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation" (Jer. 10:10). "A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind [that is, intense and complicated trouble and commotion] shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth." - Jer. 25:31-33.

In calling attention to this subject, it is not our intention to arouse a mere sensation or to seek to gratify idle curiosity. Nor can we hope to produce in the minds and hearts of men such a condition of repentance as would work a change in the present social, political, and religious order of society, and thus avert the calamity. All the powerful causes which produce the trouble have been long at work; and no human power is able to arrest their operation and progress toward their certain end. No hand but the hand of the Lord could stay the progress of the present current of events, and his hand will not do so until the bitter experiences of this conflict shall have sealed their instruction upon the hearts of men. Our only object, therefore, in mentioning the subject at all, is to forewarn, forearm, comfort, encourage, and strengthen the "household of faith," so that they may not be dismayed but be enabled to look beyond the severest measures of divine disciplining in the chastening experiences of the world and see by faith the glorious outcome in the precious fruits of righteousness and enduring peace.

### **HAS THE JUDGMENT DAY OF THE NATIONS BEGUN?**

As we look about us and note the conditions in the world today, it is difficult to escape the conclusion, especially when these conditions are considered in connection with time prophecies, that the nations have already entered their judgment day, that they are even now being weighed in the balances and found wanting. Indeed, for years it has been seen that the gathering of the nations and assembling of the kingdoms, preparatory to pouring upon them his indignation, "even all his fierce anger," as yet another Prophet (Zephaniah 3:8, 9) graphically describes it, has been in process.

Modern discovery and invention have made the remotest ends of the earth neighbors to each other. Travel, mailing facilities, the telegraph, the telephone, the radio and television have brought all the world into a community of thought and action hitherto unknown. Truly, the nations are "assembled" in a manner not expected, yet in the only manner in which they could be assembled, namely, in common interest and activity; but alas, not in brotherly love, for selfishness marks every step of this progress. The spirit of enterprise, of which selfishness is the

motive power, has prompted the construction of the railways, the steamships, the airplanes, the telegraphs, the cables, the telephones, the radios, the television sets. Selfishness regulates commerce and international relationships, and every other energy and enterprise except the preaching of the Gospel and the establishment of benevolent institutions; and even in these it is to be feared that much that is done is inspired by motives other than pure love for God and humanity. Selfishness has gathered the nations and has been steadily preparing them for the predicted, and now fast approaching, retribution which is so graphically described by the Prophet as the "fire of God's jealousy," or anger, which is about to consume utterly the present social order. Yet this is speaking only from the human standpoint. From the standpoint of the Prophet, this gathering of the nations is ascribed, not to man's own efforts, but to God. Both standpoints are true; for while man is permitted the exercise of his free agency, God, by his overruling providence, is shaping human affairs for the accomplishment of his own wise purposes. And therefore, while men and their works and ways are the agents and agencies, God is the great Commander who now gathers the nations and assembles the kingdoms from one end of the earth to the other, preparatory to the transfer of earth's dominion to him "whose right it is" -- Immanuel.

The Prophet tells us why the Lord thus gathers the nations, saying, "That I may pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger." This message would bring us sorrow and anguish only, were it not for the assurance that the results shall work good to the world, overthrowing the reign of selfishness and establishing, through Christ's Millennial Kingdom, the reign of righteousness referred to in the words of the Prophet: "Then will I turn unto the people a pure language [their communications with each other shall no longer be selfish but pure, truthful, and loving, to the intent] that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent."

### **CLOSING THOUGHTS**

We see the deepening clouds of trouble. We hear the thunder tones of judgment that "call the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof" (Psa. 50:1) -- from the east to the west. We see the lightning flashes of truth and righteousness, and observe how the whole earth is now in the shaking process which will eventuate in the complete overthrow of all existing institutions, systems, and governments. Present events indeed speak in trumpet-tones. Even as these words are being set up in type, a military expert (note-not a preacher but an army general) ends his radio news broadcast with a quotation from the Bible: "A sound of battle is in the land, and of great destruction" (Jer. 50:22). How shall we regard these things? Surely, dear reader, it will be with thoughtful and reverent hearts! In this eventful period everything that can be shaken will be shaken, that only the unshakeable things of truth and righteousness may remain (Heb. 12:25-29). Everyone called to a share in the coming Kingdom must be a lover of righteousness, one who will courageously and loyally exercise an influence which is always favorable to righteousness, justice, mercy, and peace. All others will be shaken out. In the end only the true will remain. "Seeing that we look for these things, [let us] be diligent, that we may be found of Him in [inward] peace, without spot, and blameless," as the Apostle exhorts. - 2 Pet. 3:14.

When our Lord was here in the flesh, the destruction of Jerusalem and the utter ruin of Palestine were close at hand. In those days our Savior forewarned his disciples against laying up treasures for themselves on earth. His counsel and advice to them was to lay up their treasures in heaven, and in the end they would find them there. The Lord's true people of today occupy a similar position. The great, symbolic-burning day is near. Christendom is about to be destroyed. In this great symbolic conflagration the possessions of earth will be valueless. The opportunities for laying up treasures in heaven will soon be overpast. Let us, therefore, brethren, heed the Master's words, dedicating, or rededicating, as the case may be, our all of earthly life and fortune upon his

altar and seek to employ time, talent, and ability in the service of him who hath called us from darkness to light; of him who will at last welcome the faithful to the place that he has gone to prepare, in the Father's house of many mansions; for there we shall find the heavenly treasures that can never fade, never tarnish, never rust, and the glory and luster of which will abide throughout all time. Amen.

- Reprinted from "*The Herald*," August, 1940.

## **The Return to Our Father**

### **A story for children young and old.**

*"I will arise and go to my Father." - Luke 15:18.*

IN a gallery of fine arts, two men. stood before a painting that: made a very strong appeal to one of them. The scene it depicted was that of an ivy mantled cottage, festooned with great trees, and in the background, cattle and sheep grazing on a hillside pasture. At the gate there stood a woman whose gaze was fixed upon a lad that was looking up at her with the light of love and joy shining in his eyes. It was a delightful, wholesome scene, one calculated to bring back sweet memories to many a man who might pause to view it. At length, one of the two who had been gazing at it very intently, turned to his companion and said: "Will, when you look upon that picture, you behold something of my own early home life. My mother was just such a woman as that, and I myself somewhat like the boy you see there. I had a good mother and a wonderful childhood at the old home place. But I left it while still in my teens and have never gone back since. I don't know if my folks are living or dead. But somehow that picture tells me to go back home and look them up." And back he went.

The power of suggestion contained in the painting broke through the sin-hardened encrustment of that man's mind and heart, and caused him to think of those who had loved and nurtured him, keenly enough to send him back to do the right thing, and to bring relief to hearts that had never ceased to mourn his loss. It was indeed a good picture that could work so effectively upon his memory. Would God there were more pictures like that in the world, and more artists who painted them, said his friend.

Well, thanks be to God, we do have pictures, even more heart searching than this. They are not painted on canvas with a brush, but are depicted with words-words which, like living things, leap out from the printed pages of our Bibles, and lay hold upon the hearts and minds of all who, gifted with the power of faith in God, forsake the beggarly elements of this world and return to their Father in heaven.

### **THE PRODIGAL SON**

Jesus was the unexcelled artist in the painting of word pictures; and in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 15, verses 12 to 32 (Luke 15:12-32), we find one of these pictures that has been the means of influencing many a wanderer, out in the world of sin, to return home.

The story begins with the usual round of life in an old home of a father who has two sons. As we look at the picture, we are given the impression that all is harmonious and serene. It is a well ordered home, and all things seem to run smoothly. The father is thoughtful and kind, and there is an abundance of everything necessary to their comfort and well-being. Doubtless, as in nearly all such places, the birds and the flowers enhanced the joys of their surroundings. But, for no apparent reason, there comes a time when the younger son becomes restless; he is not happy and content with his lot. From out the great world, of which he knows little, a voice seems to be calling him. This voice is the lure of the unknown quantity, and of freedom from the home restraints. And the more he thinks of it, the greater becomes his desire to explore this great unknown.

So, under this urge, he musters up courage to go to his father and ask for the portion of goods that would eventually be his, in order that he might have the means to journey hither and yon, and pay his way without having to work for his sustenance. We can imagine the father's feelings, for he had lived long enough to know something of the dangers and temptations a young man would encounter away from the home environment. He could have easily refused to comply with his son's request, but, being a wise father, he realized that the boy would not be content at home, and that he evidently needed to have the experience that such a journey would bring to him; so he gives him money to the value of his goods so that he can conveniently carry it on his person, and he lets him go, but, if we know good fathers, not without many admonitions.

### **REDUCED TO FEEDING SWINE**

The school of -experience soon begins the instruction of this young man. He learns that while it is easy to go downhill, it is hard to go uphill; easy to drift with the current, but difficult to progress against it. Being swept out into the tide of human life, he wastes his substance in riotous living, and his money is soon dissipated. Having youth and money to spend, he is of course popular, and is bon comrade to others who go in for what the world calls a good time in the swirl of life. But how different everything is when this way of life has taken its toll. The physical powers begin to go down along with the moral qualities that were all but swept away in licentious living. The complete process of decline sets in, and he goes down, down, down to depths of degradation he never dreamed were possible.

And then a famine comes upon the land. His money is all gone, and he is now in dire need. What shall he do? The decision he makes shows that there is still some good in him, for he determines to go to work. But what can he do? The famine in the land has made it difficult to find work, so he is reduced to hiring himself out to a citizen of the country to feed swine. He is fully aware of the disgrace he has brought upon himself and his people, for such an occupation was an abomination in their eyes. But he must feed the swine or starve, so he does it. He feels that he is at the bottom of the scale of degradation; and being threadbare and hungry, he is glad to eat even a portion of the swine's husks. What a terrible experience the far country has been to him! How indeed will it all end?

One day as he stands feeding the swine, no one near, no sound even save that which the swine make as they devour their husks, a thought comes to him. It is the evening hour, and the sun, like a great ball of fire, is sinking in the west. One shaft of that yellow, golden light falls near the pigsty, and it arouses a longing in the young man's heart. The light is so beautiful and pure, and reminds him so poignantly of his old home and kindred. Oh, what a wonderful home! Was there ever a homelike it? Did any one ever have such a good father? Why, even the servants had plenty and to spare, and here was he, a son, dying with hunger. As he thinks on these things, there comes the resolve into his mind to go home.

### **THE RETURN HOME**

But how can one who has been so utterly foolish as to descend to the utmost depths of degradation, expect to be received back into a godly home? Nevertheless, he is resolved to go, and to cast himself upon the mercy of a father whose righteousness and love could not be questioned. So to himself he said: "I will arise and go to- my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son make me as one of thy hired servants."

It was a great resolve he had made, and now he would lose no time about carrying it into effect. Some one else could feed these swine; he would start on his homeward journey. He had wandered far, but he knew the way back. The trail lay just over yonder under the brow of that hill where the scrub juniper grew; then over the mountain side and down into the valley beyond. He had no way of getting there but to walk, and the trail was rough and stony, but he knew it would lead him back home.

He trudged on and on, until finally he began to recognize certain landmarks. Once he had come this way with his father, who had brought some goats to the town he had just passed. Yes, there was that old olive tree under which they had stopped to eat and refresh themselves. And this intermittently running stream-he knew it well. He was in his home land, but would have to spend another night, perhaps two, in this wilderness country. Another day's journey brought him to the summit of a hill where he could see, on a far distant rise, an outlying shelter for his father's sheep. It was still too far to reach home before his father's retiring time, so he decided to wait until morning, a much more favorable time for his arrival. The question is, how will he be received?

### **THE HOME IN EDEN**

The next morning he is not far from the old homestead, when he sees an old man coming toward him along the road. It does not take long for these two to come together, for the father recognizes his son's Walk and hastens to meet his long lost boy and embrace him and bring him home. What a wonderful reunion it was to that boy, and how grateful he felt for his father's love, a hope that his own unworthiness had not diminished.

This beautiful story was told by the Master to show how precious in the sight of God is the sinner's return unto him. And who is the sinner?

The question carries us back to Eden land, where the old home of the human family was located. That this home was perfect, cannot be doubted, for it was prepared by God. It was an environment that wanted no good thing. The tree of life was there to sustain its inhabitants. Birds and flowers made the place beautiful, and sparkling waters flashed by in the sunshine. All went well for a time.

Then there came the call of the far country, the lure of the unknown quantity. The very thing they were told not to touch, was the one thing that would make them wise. The woman was captivated by the thought. To be sure, God could have prevented their wrong-doing: he could have hidden the forbidden tree in the background, or have placed an angel there to guard it; but in his great wisdom, he permitted the infraction of his law. They could not longer remain in that perfect home, but wandered forth into the far country of sin, where, with all their children, they have lived in degradation and want.

### **WASTING ITS SUBSTANCE**

Like the prodigal son, the world has wasted its substance with riotous living. It has wasted its eye-substance, by gazing on things not good for the eye to see. Likewise, its ear-substance, its heart-substance, its "brain-substance, and all the priceless wealth that God gave man at the beginning. The halls of pleasure and reckless living have engulfed many millions. The world has been going down the long incline for 6,000 years. There has been a great famine in the land. "Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord." - Amos 8:11.

Therefore, we find the world feeding the swine, the unclean things of darkness; for surely the things that people do today, nourish the unclean things of the flesh and spirit. We cannot pick up a newspaper without having these things flaunted in -our faces. Murders, robberies, domestic broils, strikes, killings, turmoils, wars, governmental sins, community sins, individual sins, political corruption, bribery, and a host of other violations of the moral code of God. It is a time when, as prophesied, men are "covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof." - 2 Tim. 3:1-5.

Yet men are not wholly bad. There is still some spark of goodness left. And in "a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation," the world will come to itself. Men will come to see that they have failed in all they have attempted to do; and that the reason therefore is, they have eliminated God from the problems of human life. He is not in all their thoughts; his laws have been utterly repudiated and cast aside. His authority has been supplanted by the great usurper, the mighty prince of darkness who took control of men's minds a long time ago. The world has sown to the wind, and now must reap the whirlwind, and "Except those days [of trouble] be shortened," said Jesus, "no flesh would be saved."

When the world comes to itself, men will want to go home again. They will desire to return ~to pristine conditions. This crowding into great cities is not natural; people need to get back to the soil, and enjoy the beauty and freedom of God's earth, its fields, meadows, and hills. There is nothing degenerative or cramping in God's great out-of-doors. So in due time, the world will start on its journey back home to God.

## **THE RECEPTION**

The striking beauty in the story of the Prodigal Son, however, is in the father's reception of his erring child. To the father, this tatterdemalion was still his son, and was dear to his heart. In the story of the lost sheep, that sheep still belonged to the shepherd. Others might say: "Lord, here are thy ninety and nine; are they not enough for thee?" but the shepherd- makes answer: "This of MINE has wandered away from me." Ah, yes, the fact of ownership makes all the difference. "And although the road be rough and steep, I go to the desert to find my sheep."

So, we will kill the fatted calf, if you please. And then we'll put a fine robe on this boy, and we'll put a ring on his finger, and shoes on his feet, and a staff in his hand; "For this my son was dead, and is alive again. He was lost and is found." There was rejoicing in the old home; but there will be a much greater time of rejoicing when the world comes home. But will there be the killing of the fatted calf? Yes, God through the Prophet says: "In this mountain [home] shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, well refined." "He will swallow up death in victory. And the people will say: Lo, this is *our* God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." - Isa. 25:6-9.

What a grand family reunion there will be when "all that are in their graves hear the voice of the Son of Man and come forth." The great tree of life will then be here with its leaves for the healing of the nations. The law of love will supplant selfishness and competition. The finer qualities of the human heart and mind will take precedence; and people will say: "Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." - Isa. 2:3.

## **SPIRITUAL SONSHIP**

In the meantime, some, having beheld a still more marvelous picture in the invitational promises of God's Word, and having realized their sin-degraded state; have turned their steps toward home in this Age, the one in which the Father is pleased to accept sacrifice and offering, acts which are prerequisite to a heavenly inheritance. They realize, of course, the utter poverty of their condition, but in their case, the Elder Brother is possessed of a very different character from the one in the parable. Their Elder Brother, sharing his Father's love and sympathy, joins with him in covering their rags and filthiness with a pure linen garment of righteousness, that they may be acceptable as a sacrifice, and enter the school where they will be fitted for the position of spiritual sons.

The realization of sonship is a most precious thing to the heart of the Christian. "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. 6:17, 18.) The Apostle reaffirms this when he says: "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a faithless and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." - Phil. 2:15, 16.

As the Prodigal Son was given new shoes on his feet, so the Christian is given the sandals of peace, to enable him to walk in newness of life, and to endeavor to follow in the footsteps of his Lord. Also he is provided with the robe of righteousness, to cover the unsightly qualities of his fallen flesh. Consequently, "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." (Rom. 8:1.) "Being justified by faith, these have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1.) Indeed, "old things have passed away, all things have become new."

The ring placed on the finger, is the symbol of a covenant or promise. These have entered into, a covenant of sacrifice with the Lord; they are embraced in the great, everlasting covenant, for through them as the seed of Abraham, God will bless all the families of the earth. They can hold up this ring and look at it whenever they choose, and see there a brilliant gem -- the wondrous star of divine hope and promise for the world.

Then the Christian has a staff to lean on. "Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me," wrote David. And what can this be but the Word of God? We remember that at the time of the Passover, the Israelites were to have their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand. In olden times, the staff was used as a means of protection. Joseph, Jacob, Moses, and other servants of God all used this staff of defense. The Christian is also dependent upon it. When Jesus worsted the great Adversary, he did it by three sharp 'blows ' from the Word of God, saying, "It is written." The Apostle Paul compares the Word to a sword, saying, "Take the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God." Thus the Christian warrior is in all points well equipped.

As a Christian stands in the light of God's great sanctuary of peace and praise, into which he was led by the hand divine; and as he thinks of his former wanderings, he is very thankful to the God of all mercies for his inestimable gifts. He is glad that he was enabled by the grace of God to come to himself; to realize his condition of poverty in his pitiful failures of the past, and that now, in the joy of the Lord which is his strength; he can press onward toward the attainment of all that he desires in the Kingdom above. There the little rivers of our present lives will merge into the boundless ocean of eternal light and joy.

- W. Sargeant.



# History, Organization, and Doctrine of Associated Bible Students

*[For the benefit of new readers we publish below an article which appeared in "The Herald" for February, 1939. Taken largely from Brother Russell's writings, it was prepared for at the request of the Census Bureau of the U. S. Dept. of Commerce for the "history, doctrine, organization, and work" of Associated Bible Students.]*

## History

THE history of Associated Bible Students Classes begins in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, during the period 1870 to 1875, when a little company of truth seekers began to discover in their study of the Divine Word more of the lengths and breadths, the heights and depths', of the love of God; that God's oath bound covenant to Abraham that in his seed *all* the families of the earth shall be blessed must surely be fulfilled, although millions have gone into their graves without receiving that blessing. They observed the Apostle Paul's teaching (Gal. 3:8, 16, 27, 29) that primarily that Seed of blessing is Christ, but that those also who have been baptized into Christ in the spirit and become truly Christ's have become heirs of that promise, that they might become associated with Christ as kings and priests in ruling and blessing all the families of the earth (2 Tim. 2:12); and they saw further that in order to receive that blessing *all must come forth* from their graves and be brought to a clear knowledge of the truth and to a full opportunity to gain everlasting life. (John 5:28, 29, R. V.; 1 Tim. 2:3, 6.) This they saw to be the restitution work foretold in Acts 3:21. Although seeing that the Church was called to joint-heirship with the Lord in the Millennial Kingdom, prior to that time they had failed to see clearly the great distinction between the reward of the Church *now* on trial, and the reward of the faithful of the world after *their* trial at the close of the Millennial Age -- that the reward of the former is to be the glory- of the spiritual, divine nature, while that of the latter is to the glory of restitution -- restoration to the perfection of human nature once enjoyed in Eden by their progenitor Adam. The years which followed were years of continued growth in grace and knowledge respecting the various features of the divine plan of salvation.

Charles Taze Russell, a young business man of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, became the outstanding leader in this movement, as some of the other early leaders began to deny, the doctrine that the death of Christ was the ransom price for Adam and all his race, a doctrine which Mr. Russell always maintained as the only sure, rock foundation for Christian faith. His first published pamphlet was "The Object and Manner of Our Lord's Return" (50,000 copies), written to show that the object of our Lord's return is not to destroy, but to bless, all the families of the earth, and that His coming would be thief-like, not in the flesh but as a spirit being, invisible to man (John 14:19), and that the gathering of His Church and the separation of the "wheat" from the "tares" would progress in the end of this Age without the world being aware of it. In 1876 Mr. Russell closed out his Philadelphia business and thereafter devoted his time and his small fortune to traveling, preaching, and writing. In July 1879, appeared the first issue of his magazine, "Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence," which he continued to publish, monthly until December 1891, semi-monthly thereafter, until his death. In 1881 he published "Food for Thinking Christians" and "Tabernacle Teachings" (1,400,000 copies). These were followed by six volumes originally issued under the title "Millennial Dawn," later renamed, as a series, "Studies in the Scriptures," as follows: Vol. I, "The Divine Plan of the Ages," 1886 (nearly 5 million copies issued, in 20 languages, during the author's lifetime); Vol. II, "The Time is at Hand," 1889 (more than one and a half million copies); Vol. III, "Thy Kingdom Come," 1890 (more than one and a half million copies); Vol. IV, "The Battle of Armageddon," 1897 (over 460,000 copies); Vol V, "The At-One-Ment between 'God and Man,'" 1899 (over 440,000 copies); Vol. VI, "The

New Creation," 1903 (over 420,000 copies); also the booklets "Tabernacle Shadows," (one million copies), and "What Say the Scriptures about Hell?" (three million copies), and numerous tracts. The movement grew until at the time of his death in October, 1916, he was pastor, of more than 1,200 congregations in various parts of the world. His writings were translated into more than 35 different languages, and his weekly sermons, handled by a newspaper syndicate, were published at one time in more than 2,000 newspapers, with a- combined circulation of 15 million copies. He organized and conducted a lecture bureau which employed many traveling lecturers on Bible subjects. This brief statement of the activities' of Pastor C. T. Russell is a necessary background to a proper tracing of the history of Associated Bible Students Classes of today.

Mr. Russell used, in his public work, the corporate name *International Bible Students Association*, which name was often applied to the Classes of Bible students. Earlier the name *Associated Bible Students* was also used by such Classes. After the death of Mr. Russell, the corporate organization continued for several years to use the name *International Bible Students Association*, while those Classes which have drawn away from the corporate organization have quite generally assumed the name *Associated Bible Students*, and in some instances, *Berean Bible Students*. The corporate organization has departed in many respects from the understanding of doctrines as presented in "Studies in the Scriptures," and has ceased to distribute Mr. Russell's writings, which has led to the loss of many of its former supporters, while Associated Bible Students Classes as a whole still adhere quite closely to the views presented in his writings.

### **Organization**

The organization of Associated Bible Students is congregational in character, that is, they adhere to that form of church government in which each congregation acts as independent, self-governing body, while maintaining fellowship with other like congregations. It was the infringement of this principle after Mr. Russell's death which first led to the withdrawal of support of the corporate organization by these congregations. Their ministers are termed elders, but assume no ecclesiastical titles. They maintain no membership rolls, but recognize as brethren in Christ all who profess converse on through faith in Christ's ransom sacrifice, and full consecration to God in response to His invitation as in Romans 12:1, 2, and who (give evidence thereof by their course in life.

### **Doctrine**

The Apostle Paul declares that "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17, R. V.) The Divine Word being sufficient to perfect the man of god, the true spirit of Associated Bible Students' teaching is not to build up another sect by adding tests outside the full and complete acceptance of the Word itself and conformance of the life to its teachings, that thus they may be one with all who are truly the Lord's. They have therefore formulated no creed to be accepted as a condition of fellowship, their position being that expressed in "Studies in the Scriptures," Vol. VI, page 241:

"The real need of the Church of Christ is *still more liberty* -- until each individual member shall stand free and independent of all human bonds, creeds, confessions, etc. With each individual Christian standing fast in the liberty wherewith he was made free by the Lord (Gal. 5:1; John 8:32), and each individual Christian united in loyalty to the Lord and to His Word, very quickly the original unity which the Scriptures inculcated would be discerned, and all true children of God, all members of the New Creation, would find themselves drawn to each other member similarly free, and bound each to the other by the cords of love far more strongly than are men

bound in earthly systems and societies. 'The love of Christ constraineth us' (holds us together -- Young's Concordance) - 2 Cor. 5:14."

One other passage from the pen of Mr. Russell on this:

". . . the wisdom that cometh from above. . . entreats and exhorts for unity only in the Lord and along the line of questions positively settled by the Lord in the Scriptures -- which generously leaves with each full liberty to act and to judge on all questions not positively settled by the Scriptures. We urge that all of the Lord's dear flock copy the wisdom of the Apostle in this matter." - *Watch Tower*.

Perhaps the best concise summary of what Associated Bible Students understand the Holy Scriptures to teach is that which from 1895 was published in every issue of the Watch Tower and is now printed in every issue of the two larger magazines published by Associated Bible Students, under the heading

### **To Us the Scriptures Clearly Teach**

"That the Church is 'the Temple of the Living God' -- peculiarly 'His workmanship'; that its construction has been in progress throughout the Gospel Age -- ever since Christ became the world's Redeemer and the Chief Corner Stone of His Temple, through which, when finished, God's blessing shall come 'to all people,' and they find access to Him. - 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; Eph. 2:20-22; Gen. 28:14; Gal. 3:29.

"That meantime the chiseling, shaping, and polishing of consecrated believers in Christ's Atonement for sin, progresses; and when the last of these 'living stones,' 'Elect and precious,' shall have been made ready, the great Master Workman will bring all together in the First Resurrection; and the Temple shall be filled with His glory, and be the meeting place between God and men throughout the Millennium. -- Rev. 15:5-8.

"That the Basis of Hope, for the Church and the World, lies in the fact that 'Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for *every* man,' 'a Ransom for all,' and will be 'the true Light which lighteth *every man that cometh into the world,*' 'in due time.' -- Heb. 2:9; John 1:9; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6.

"That the Hope of the Church is that she may be like her Lord, 'see Him as He is,' be 'partaker of the Divine nature,' and share His glory as His joint-heir. -- 1 John 3:2; John 17:24; Rom. 8:17; 2 Pet. 1:4.

"That the present mission of the Church is the perfecting of the saints for the future work of service; to develop in herself every grace; to be God's witness to the world; and to prepare to be kings and priests in the next Age. -- Eph. 4:12; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:6; 20:6.

"That the hope for the World lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to *all* by Christ's Millennial Kingdom-the Restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and His glorified Church-when all the willfully wicked will be *destroyed*. -- *Acts* 3:19-23; *Isa.* 35."

Those desiring to obtain a more full understanding of the beliefs of Associated Bible Students are referred to the six volumes of "Studies in the Scriptures," and particularly to Vol. I, "The Divine Plan of the Ages," now published by Pastoral Bible Institute, 177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn, N. Y., and Dawn Publishers, Inc., 136 Fulton Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. Foreign connections are Bible Students' Committee, 24 Darwin Road, Welling, Vol. I will be cheerfully loaned to all who apply.

## 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.*

PERHAPS the first great blessing enjoyed by one who becomes a follower of the Master is that of Christian liberty. Liberty from the bondage of sin is first experienced liberty from both its guilt and power. (Rom. 3:23; 5:1; 6:12-14) Almost simultaneously comes liberty of conscience, which demands freedom to examine all sides of any matter pertaining to Christian faith and practice. (This phase of Christian liberty, indeed, is seen to be a duty, as far as ability and circumstances may permit, for "he that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." - Prov. 18:13.) Ere long Christian liberty is found to include also freedom from sectarianism.

At this stage in his development a young Christian is likely to be given experiences designed by his heavenly Father to teach him how to distinguish the "not many fathers from the "ten thousand instructors" (or would be instructors) which crowd him on every side. - 1 Cor. 4:15.

Sectarianism has been variously described. The dictionaries I have consulted associate with it the thought of exclusiveness, narrowness, or bigotry. The word "sect" itself comes from the Latin *secare, sectum*, and means a section or part cut off. Sectarianism is that disposition which seeks to divide and separate the Lord's people by the construction of creedal fences; by the application of tests of fellowship or church membership -- *often of church eldership* -- tests not authorized by the Word of God. Again and again, throughout the Gospel Age, God's faithful people, who are at heart, lovers of liberty, have been forced apart, by certain cliques or groups of sectarians, who have ingeniously applied unscriptural tests, the effect of which is to rob the Lord's people of their liberty in Christ. Thus sectarianism is a separation from the true Church, where alone Christian liberty is to be found.

Today, when changes, events, and circumstances are causing many of the Lord's faithful people to reexamine and search the Scriptures more diligently than ever, if possible, to discover what the foundation principles of Christian liberty, fellowship, unity, *and eldership* are, it is instructive to review the considered counsel of one who, for about the space of forty years, proved his right to be heard with respectful attention. The following paragraphs are from his pen:

"The first danger against which the Apostle warned the Church was sectarianism; and he was evidently heeded at the time at least, for no great sects of Paulites or Apollosites developed. But, as usual, the great enemy, thwarted in one direction, moved to the opposite extreme, and attempted to insist upon a oneness very different from what our Lord or the Apostles ever taught. This attempt was to have every recognized member of the church think exactly alike, on every minutia of Christian doctrine. This attempt finally developed into Papacy, where every matter of doctrine was decided by the popes and councils; and every man who desired to be considered a church member was obliged to accept such decisions fully, and to profess that such decisions were *his* belief, *his* faith; whereas they were not his in any sense but that of adoption. They were generally either blindly received or hypocritically professed with mental reservations."

"This was not at all the oneness urged by Paul. He urged a oneness of heart and mind, and not a thoughtless, heartless, or hypocritical profession. He urged a oneness such as naturally results from the proper exercise of the liberty which we have in Christ -- to search and believe the Scriptures, and to grow in grace and in knowledge, every man being thus fully persuaded in his

own mind, and firmly rooted and grounded in the one faith as set forth in the *Scriptures*." - *Reprints* R1571.

"The value of true liberty amongst the Lord's people cannot be overestimated. It becomes a part of their very life. It was because, under a wrong conception of union, this spirit of true liberty was crushed out of the church shortly after the Apostles fell asleep in death that the "dark ages" resulted-with all their ignorance, superstition, blindness, persecution, etc. The Reformation movement of the sixteenth century was but a re-awakening of the spirit of liberty; ... liberty to think inside the foundation lines of the doctrines of Christ; liberty to believe as much or as little more, in harmony with this, as the mental conditions and circumstances will permit, without being branded as a heretic or persecuted by brethren, either in word or deed... Let all who are the Lord's people, and who have tasted of the liberty wherewith Christ makes free, see to it that they stand fast in that liberty, and as soon as an attempt is made to restrain it, if not sooner, let them get out completely from all the bondages of human systems, that they may stand firmly and loyally with the Lord, our Redeemer, our Instructor, our *King*." - *Reprints* R3020.

"Every one who comes to realize the liberty of the sons of God and full freedom from Babylon's bondage, should expect to meet other attempts of the great Adversary to bring him into other bondages, or to stumble him. The Lord permits these severe testings, that the class now sought may be manifested, and prepared for his service in the Kingdom of glory." - S.S. Vol. III, p. C188.

"We should remember our Lord's teachings, . . . that those who are no - against us are on our part, and that we should neither reprove as wolves nor disown as brethren those whose hearts, whose characters, give evidence that they belong to the Lord, even though they follow not with-us in respect to his service, the promulgation of his message, etc: In other words, we are to love all and wish God-speed to all loving the Lord and manifesting his spirit, whether they associate with us or not." - *Reprints* R3747.

"The true teacher's place, and the true Bible student's place, is outside of all human bondage, free to examine and feed upon all portions of the good Word of God, and untrammled to follow the Lamb whithersoever he leads." - S.S. Vol. III, p. C145.

- P. L. Read.

## The Question Box

*"The Gospel whereof I Paul am made a minister; who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his Body's sake, which is the Church." - Col. 1:23, 24.*

### Question No. 1

Is it correct to take these words as having reference to any one but St. Paul?

#### Answer:

There can be no question but that this passage is used by the Apostle as having reference to himself, and to no one else. The afflictions to which he refers are, he says, "in my [that is, in his own flesh." However, I see no reason for doubting that in these experiences which he mentions he is but giving us an example which every true follower of Jesus does well to follow. It is of himself and of no one else that he speaks in Phil. 3:8-10, when he tells us that he counts all things but loss that he might know Christ, and the fellowship of his sufferings; but in Col. 1:17 he urges us to follow his example. Again, I do not think there is any room for question but that in 2 Cor. 1:5, when he speaks of the sufferings of Christ abounding in "us," he includes in that word "us" his associate in the ministry, namely, "Timothy our brother." (See 2 Cor. 1:1.) Moreover, in 2 Timothy 1:8, he exhorts Timothy to be a "partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel."

It is, indeed, a great privilege to enter into such a partnership with Christ as permits of sharing not only in his joys but also in his sufferings; and the Apostle eagerly embraced the privilege. But it would surely be a mistaken thought to suppose that he was selfish in the matter. In Hebrews 10:32 the writer is glad to remember "the great fight of afflictions" which others besides himself had endured. Peter also counseled the "strangers" to whom he wrote, to rejoice, inasmuch as they were made "partakers of Christ's sufferings." - 1 Pet 4:13.

To summarize: Paul is the only one to whom the words in Col. 1: 23, 24 refer. However, the general principle applies to all the "little flock" of footstep followers of the Master.

### Question No. 2

The "afflictions of Christ" here mentioned are stated to 'be "for his Body's sake, which is the Church." However, in *Tabernacle Shadows*, page 66, these afflictions are represented as corresponding to the typical experiences of "the goat of the sin-offering, that is for the people. (Lev. 16:15.) Since, throughout the New Testament, the "Church" is distinguished from the remainder of mankind or the "people," how are these apparently conflicting statements to be harmonized?

#### Answer:

The conflict between these two statements is more apparent than real. If you will turn to *Scripture Studies Vol. VI*, page F468, I think you will find the matter satisfactorily clarified. There you will note the statement that the actual sufferings which are -endured by us are "in the main for the brethren-in their service; the service for the world belongs chiefly to the Age to come, the Millennium." On this same page the author points out that "we are not now speaking of how the Lord may be pleased to apply the sacrifice of the Church," which he understood (properly, I think) to be "represented in the Lord's goat as a part of the Atonement Day sacrifices."

Since it is our privilege to walk "in his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21), let us see how our Lord did, in fact, lay down his life. Was it not mainly in behalf of those who had an "ear to hear"? It surely was. Very little of his strength was expended otherwise. So it has been and is to be with us. True, we are to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, and opportunities to do good *thus* should be sought and seized; but we find, as a matter of practical experience, that most of our opportunities do occur in connection with the household of faith. He would hold the wrong notion, therefore, who today was seeking to lay down his life, moment by moment, inch by inch, on behalf of the world, basing such efforts on his belief that the Lord intended to ultimately apply the result of the Church's sacrifice to the blessing of the people.

Let me not be misunderstood here. I have much sympathy with many of the activities designed for the general welfare, and occasionally, find opportunity to engage in some of them. Certainly I am most sympathetic with any activity in which sincere efforts are put forth to proclaim the message which has so gladdened my own heart; and I have not hesitated, nor shall I fail to continue, to cooperate to the best of my ability, in such witnessing activities. However, it remains true, in my judgment, that those who today perform their labors in the Gospel ministry in the belief that they are commissioned to accomplish a great work on behalf of the general public, and do so to the neglect of their own and their brethren's spiritual needs, are ill-advised. We must leave the application of the Church's sacrifice to the Lord, for him to apply to the good of the "people" in his own time and way; finding that here and now, as a matter of actual fact, our sacrifice, (Does he really honor our feeble efforts by so noble a word?) will be mainly spent in the; service of our brethren. As St. John expresses the matter: "*He laid down' his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*" - 1 John 3:16, *RSV*.

- P. L. Read.

## **A Card of Thanks**

Again we are taking this means of expressing our gratitude to the dear friends for their messages of encouragement and cheer, that have come to us during the past year, and especially during the recent holiday season-messages that are not only gratifying and heart-cheering but are encouraging to faith. The assurance that friends are "helping together by prayer for us" is one of our great encouragements. Be sure that our earnest prayers ascend daily on your behalf that "the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all, even as we do toward you; to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God." As one message expresses it:

"'Your Father knoweth.' In His loving hands  
How safe you are, for well He understands  
Your every need;  
And will supply it from His throne on High."

"The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

## **Recently Deceased**

Sister Sophia Adamowicz, Chicago, Ill. - (December).  
Sister Margaret Bell, Jacksonville, Fla. - (November).  
Sister Apolania Dembonski, Milwaukee, Wis. - (December).  
Brother W H. E,iman, Augusta, Me. - (December).  
Brother M. Surrey, London, Eng. - (December).  
Brother H. C. Thackway, London, Eng. - (December).