

THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

VOL. XXXVIII October, 1955 No. 10

Life's Empty Victories

The following article was written, just prior to his death, by a regular contributor to a secular newspaper, namely, "The Minneapolis Tribune," December 19, 1932. When it was written, its stated purpose was to assist his readers in formulating their 1933 New Year resolutions. We thought enough of it at the time to publish it in the "Herald" (Feb. 1933) and have reprinted it once or twice since. But at no time in the past have its lessons seemed more appropriate than today; so, once again, we commend this article to the thoughtful consideration of our readers. Ed. Com.

AS A MAN grows older, yet has not reached extreme old age, when, presumably, all his past is mellowed and softened in the pleasant, tranquil light of sunset and both mistakes and right acts are equally overspread by the thought that nothing has mattered much, since the whole thing will be soon over; when he arrives at the stage in life's journey where he reviews the past, not alone for the gentle pleasure of reminiscence, but also to seek guidance for his remaining future, and while he still imagines that it is possible for him to mold his character into the secret ideal which he has all along vainly struggled to perfect, there comes, at least to the man of the average temperament, in this pause of review, this moment of rest before he completes his destiny, the thought of how much happier, and better and altogether pleasanter his life might have been had he avoided as he might easily have done, certain complications and conflicts which, at the time, seemed to him mightily important.

When they occurred, he was absolutely certain that the triumph of his opinion was a matter of tremendous consequence; it was essential that he should override the opposition and impress upon his opponent the pre-eminent truth and right of his position; and so he went at him, hard and strong, and in the heat of the controversy, which ripened into a feud and perhaps ended in the permanent estrangement of one who might once have been counted a friend, he said or did things which were hard and bitter, and better left unsaid or undone.

Perhaps he gained his point; beat down his antagonist and sent him, humbled and mortified, from the contest, to nurse his grievance ever after, and nourish to the end of his days a smouldering hate of the man who got the better of him; or worse, to cherish the feeling that he had been hardly used.

Strange it should be that, in his later years, the outcome does not seem to have been of very great consequence. What remains permanently is the memory of the incident, and a regret that it should have occurred.

Looking back, he realizes the exact moment when he might have refrained from pressing his man to the limit, have perhaps sufficiently satisfied his self-respect and vindicated the justness of his contention without sacrificing a possible friend. Probably it would puzzle him now to state exactly what it was all about then, this famous victory, but he remembers it was a great fight and he was in it and he is sorry.

Not sorry that he stood up stoutly in defense of his positive convictions; no man ever regrets that, but sorry that he should have esteemed it necessary to go to such lengths in pursuit of his ends that it put reconciliation and ultimate restoration of friendship beyond the bounds of the possible. He remembers these incidents with a vague discomfort. No matter which of the two was in the wrong, he holds himself responsible for the outcome.

Did he convince the other of his error? Scarcely. "He that complies against his will is of his own opinion still." Did the encounter seriously contribute to the upbuilding of his own character? Hardly, unless it was desirable to encourage in himself the love of fighting for the fight's sake. His later calm and deliberate conviction is that it was not worth while, and he grudges the vitality and energy he put into it, which might well have been conserved to later, more mature and far better use.

The thing the man remembers at this particular point in his life with the most satisfaction is not such a fruitless contest, but rather the time when, by conceding a point, by some exercise of forbearance in pressing an advantage, he made a friend of his opponent, although they differed irreconcilably. Touching these other encounters, which at the moment it seemed so necessary to win, but which in the end were so barren of real gain, he says, somewhat sorely, "Let them be forgotten and forgiven."

He recalls with secret gratification not his paltry and vainglorious victories, but his flabby and perhaps sentimental concessions: the small foolish, kindly things that he did, rare enough, he admits, but fruitful in pleasing memories. For, after all, we are men tarred with the same stick; more or less good, bad or indifferent, as the case may be, yet all capable of doing something kind for each other. He draws from his past the lesson of tolerance, for the future that is left to him, and resolves, perhaps vainly, but at least, for the moment, sincerely, that henceforth, while he may never falter in defense of a principle, he will try hard to so moderate his attacks upon the other man as to leave no sting past healing.

The assets he counts up with the most satisfaction are the friends he finds about him. What they may expect of him is the animus of his future. He will endeavor to be true to them and to his own convictions, but he will avoid the useless multiplication of enemies. This is his hope, as he takes stock of what lies before him.

Perhaps the writer could offer no suggestion to his readers, touching the form which good resolves, customary at this season of the year, should take, that would be better for ourselves and

for the world we live in, than that we will lead kindlier lives; that we will be less sure and less harsh in our judgments; that we will refrain as far as in us lies from giving the other man "a piece of our minds;" that we will leave room for him to be convinced of his error, if he be wrong and we right, not through the might of our pounding, but rather through the gradual change in his own convictions; that we will finally try to, proceed on the way that we esteem the right and only one with less friction, believing that which is true and right will prevail anyhow, and the surer and swifter if it be not enforced by contention.

In a word, to resolve to make friends, not at the sacrifice of conviction or principle, but by conceding to others the simple right of learning the truth in their own time and in their own way, helped perhaps by our, of course, pre-eminently wise suggestion and example, if truly they be such, but at least not hindered by our overemphatic dictum. . .

Perhaps the writer could offer no suggestion to his readers, touching the form which good resolves, customary at this season of the year, should take, that would be better for ourselves and for the world we live in, than that we will lead kindlier lives; that we will be less sure and less harsh in our judgments; that we will refrain as far as in us lies from giving the other man "a piece of our minds"; that we will leave room for him to be convinced of his error, if he be wrong and we right, not through the might of our pounding, but rather through the gradual change in his own convictions; that we will finally try to proceed on the way that we esteem the right and only one with less friction, believing that which is true and right will prevail anyhow, and the surer and swifter if it be not enforced by contention.

In a word, to resolve to make friends, not at the sacrifice of conviction or principle, but by conceding to others the simple right of learning the truth in their own time and in their own way, helped perhaps by our, of course, pre-eminently wise suggestion and example, if truly they be such, but at least not hindered by our overemphatic dictum

"The ill-timed truth we might have kept
Who knows how sharp it pierced and stung?
The word we had not sense to say
Who knows how grandly it had rung?"

Half Hour Meditations on Romans

No. 8

Even as our beloved Brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his Epistles speaking in them of these things. -- 2 Pet. 3:15, 16

Letters weighty and strong. -- 2 Cor. 10:10, R. S. V.

Our last two Meditations were devoted to the consideration of a special article on "The Doctrine of Election" in chapter 9 contributed by Alex D. Kirkwood of Glasgow, Scotland. We now resume our studies at the point where we left them at the close of Meditation No. 5 in the HERALD of June 1955, page 93.

IN OUR previous Meditations we have reviewed to some extent the life of Paul and thought a while on the Christians in Rome to whom he wrote. Now we confess to a spirit of impatience -- we trust it is a spirit of "blessed impatience" -- to at once enter "the Cathedral of our Christian faith" as the Epistle to the Romans has been called. Yet as soon as we have entered we shall find ourselves handicapped in ability to adequately appreciate "the majesty of the whole or the finish of its details" unless we have previously taken the time to equip our minds with a view of this Epistle in its relation to the rest of the New Testament, and especially to those other epistles of St. Paul, to which from time to time we shall find it necessary in our study of Romans to make reference.

Letter Form of New Testament Providential

The mere fact that so much of Gods truth has been revealed to us in the form of letters should give us cause for reflection. "Of all the sacred books which the world has seen there is not one which is composed mainly, or at all, of letters, with the single exception of the New Testament. . . . The New Testament is entirely composed of a collection of letters together with five historical books and one Apocalyptic vision. . . . In this, as in all other respects, the ways of Gods providence differ from mans expectations. We may thank God that we derive some of the deepest truths of our belief from documents so simple, so individual, so full of human interest and love. Most of which are written in a style the most personal that ever existed. "Yes it may perhaps be doubted whether there are ever many persons in an ordinary congregation who if asked to explain what is the special scope and outline, the characteristic meaning and tenor of any one of those deeply important letters would be able to do so with any definiteness. But surely this is necessary for an intelligent acquaintance with the oracles of God: a real knowledge of the Bible and reverence for it, a power to read aright. We should know something of its books as well as of those isolated fragments that we call texts. . . .

"As to . . . the epistolary form of the New Testament, it might perhaps strike us as strange that the deepest truths and the highest arguments of our religion should have been conveyed to us in casual letters. For, humanly speaking, casual they were. . . . Every Christian will feel that they were preserved by a special Divine providence, but it is none the less true that their preservation was owing to causes that in ordinary language might be called accidental. Nor, again, were they predetermined letters; they rose for the most part out of the circumstances of the day. . . . And this, so far from being a matter of regret, was a happy circumstance. . . . Christian theology would have been immeasurably less effective if it had been conveyed to the world in canons or articles or liturgies or scholastic treatises.

"The epistolary form of Christian instruction was, then, a providential arrangement, first of all, . . . because that form of writing is essentially unsystematic. . . . The method of the Bible is alien from the spirit of elaborate, technical, all explaining theological systems. . . . The technical terminology, the rigid systematization of Divine mysteries is due to exigencies caused by human error -- sometimes even to the pride of human reason -- far more than to the initiative set us by the sacred writers" (Farrar).

Letter Form Specially Adapted to Individuality of Apostle Paul

Again, the letter form "permitted of a freedom of expression far more vigorous and far more natural to the Apostle Paul than the regular syllogisms and rounded periods of a formal book. It admitted some thing of the tenderness and something of the familiarity of personal intercourse. Into no other literary form could have been infused that intensity of feeling . . . that made Luther compare his words to living creatures with hands and feet. A letter is eminently personal, flexible, spontaneous; it is like a stenographed conversation. It best enabled Paul to be himself and to recall most vividly to the minds of his spiritual children the tender, suffering, inspired, . . . impassioned, humble, uncompromising teacher who, in courage and in trembling, in zeal and weakness, in close reasonings and strong appeals, had first taught them to be imitators of himself and of the Lord. His epistles came fresh and burning from the heart, and therefore they go fresh and burning to the heart. Take away from them the traces of individual feeling, the warmth, the invective, the yearning affection, the vehement denunciations, the bitter sarcasm, the distressed boasting, the rapid interrogatives, the frank colloquialisms, the private details, the impassioned personal appeals -- all that has been absurdly called their intense egotism -- and they would never have been as they are, next to the psalms of David and for something of the same reason, the

dearest treasures of Christian devotion -- next to the four Gospels, the most cherished text books of Christian faith. St. Paul was eminently and emphatically a man who had known much life, . . . had seen many cities, and knew the minds of men. He was no narrow scribe, no formalizing Pharisee, no stunted ascetic, no dreaming recluse, no scholastic theologian, no priestly externalist who could suppose that the world depended on the right burning of the two kidneys and the fat. He was a man full of strength and weakness, full of force and fire. He was not a man to mistake words for things or outward scrupulosity for true service or verbal formulae for real knowledge. . . . What can be more free and buoyant and varied than St. Paul's letters? Brilliant, broken, impetuous as the mountain torrent freshly filled; never smooth and calm but on the eve of some great leap; never vehement but to fill some pool of clearest peace; they present everywhere the image of a vigorous joy. Beneath their reasonings and their philosophy there may ever be heard a secret lyric strain of glorious praise, bursting at times into open utterance and asking others to join the chorus.

His life was a battle from which in intervals of the good fight his words arose as the song of victory.

Chronological Order Important to Remember

"For any one who desires to gain a real historical conception of their meaning and of the vast part they play in the development of Christian doctrine, the first thing necessary is to ascertain and remember their chronological order. . . . No one doubts that we best understand the mind, character, and teachings of any author when we study his writings with some reference to the age at which and the order in which he wrote them. Most of all is this desirable in the case of one who was always growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as was St. Paul, whose thoughts under the guidance of the Holy Spirit went on deepening and expanding even to his death. . . .

"Many years of the Apostles ministry elapsed before he wrote a single line that has come down to us.

He was converted probably about the age of thirty.

His first letter (the First to the Thessalonians) was not written until his second great missionary journey when he was forty six years old. All his letters fall into four distinct groups separated roughly by a period of four or five years each and covering a space in his life from the age of forty six to the age of sixty one. Those four groups are the letters of his second missionary journey, namely the two to Thessalonica; those of the third missionary journey, the Epistles to the Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans; those of the first imprisonment at Rome: the four to Philippi, Ephesus, Colosse, and Philemon; and those between his liberation and his martyrdom: the letter to Titus and the two to Timothy, of which the last was written in his last Roman imprisonment and when he was expecting, almost daily, the stroke of death" (Farrar).

[Note: As is well known, the authorship of the anonymous Epistle to the Hebrews is not established. While recognizing it to be "Pauline in its general tone" and its teaching "fundamentally the same as St. Paul's," Farrar did not regard it as the work of St. Paul and consequently limits his discussion to the thirteen mentioned.]

The Four Groups

The first group is called the *eschatological* epistles: those that bear on the last things; the epistles having to do more especially with the Second Advent of our Lord: Christ's personal return first *for* his saints and then *with* them.

The second group are St. Paul's four most powerful, most argumentative, most impassioned epistles.

They may be characterized as the letter of controversy: controversy with Judaism within and without. The doctrinal and universal importance of these four epistles can hardly be exaggerated. The particular details of the controversy are obsolete. The then "burning questions" have "burnt themselves out." But the principles developed are eternal. In them St. Paul fought out and won for all time the battle of full and free salvation; of faith as against works; of mercy as against sacrifice; of the obsolescence not only of Levitism itself but of the whole sacerdotal spirit. He showed forever that the true worship of the Christian consists in spirituality, not in ceremonialism; in heart service, not in outward ritual; in the religion of the life, not in forms of service; in being, not in doing; in love, not in orthodox formulas or shibboleths. In these letters we have the grandest phase of the struggle of the teachings of the Prophets against the usurpation of the priests; the proofs of the groundlessness and nullity of all those persecuting tyrannies and of all that theological intolerance which springs from the pride and ambition of the human heart.

It was in Rome chained by the wrist to a soldier by day and by night that he wrote his third group of letters. They also are four in number: two to the Philippians, the one to Philemon (dictated by personal affection and special incidents) and the two great *christological* epistles to Ephesus and Colosse (to counteract a dreamy, subtle, incipient heresy) in which he develops and expands in all its splendor the doctrine of the pre-existence, the headship and supremacy of our risen and ascended Savior the Lord Jesus Christ.

During the next four years he wrote his fourth and last group of letters: the three letters to pastors Titus and Timothy. Shortly after the last of these he was put to death. Tradition tells us that he was led out along the Appian Way and there beheaded; to await the crown of righteousness the Lord had promised to give him "at that day." And not to him only but to us also if we "love his appearing."

Summary

"Such then are the four groups of Epistles: the first two mainly eschatological; the next four mainly controversial; of the next four, two occasional and two christological; the last three pastoral. But, further, every one of these thirteen epistles, of which we have just seen the order, has its own special characteristic, its prominent idea, generally its central passage, often even its dominant word or key note.

"The first group to the Thessalonians were eschatological, the epistles of the Second Advent. The first is characterized by its extreme sweetness; both are eminently full of consolation. The whole idea of the first is to look to Christ as a comfort in tribulation, Maranatha, the Lord is near. The second was written to correct the error that Christ's coming would be instantaneous and to obviate the neglect of daily earthly duties that sprang from the exciting expectation. Its most characteristic and indeed all but unique section is that in the second chapter about the Apostasy and the Man of Sin.

"The second group is the Anti Judaic group of controversy, written in the great period of distress and conflict. The First to the Corinthians is the epistle of church discipline. It decides by great principles the little details of life and worship. Its fundamental idea is Christian unity. Its chief passages are the unparalleled chapters 13 and 15. In one the Apostle develops his magnificent argument for the Resurrection and in the other, like some great poet, with his garland and singing robes about him, pours forth his inspired, impassioned paean to the glory of Christian love.

"The Second to the Corinthians falls into two main divisions. The key note of the first nine chapters is consolation in sorrow; that of the other chapters is boasting: the boasting of his adversaries that drove him into a boasting which would have been abhorrent to him had it not been that his boast was in his infirmities and in the Cross of Christ his Lord. The Epistle is specially marked by its intense emotion. It is full of haunting words: now tribulation, now commendation, now boast. It is the Epistle of personal details. . . .

"In the Epistle to the Galatians we find him again in a far different mood. It is the epistle of indignant warning; the only epistle he wrote throughout with his own hand. It is his gage of defiance to the Judaists: his triumphant note of exultation over abrogated ordinances and freedom perfected. Here, more than in all the rest, as Luther said, he speaks mere flames!

"In the Epistle to the Romans the same theme -- justification by faith not works; universality of sin and of grace -- is again developed in its positive rather than its antithetical aspect. The theme is handled doctrinally and systematically: not as in Galatians, with impassioned controversy, but with irresistible logic and calm and sympathetic strength.

"St. Paul had gone through much by the time we come to the third group. It is the christological group.

In personal force he was a shattered man. He was calmer, he was sadder, he was yet wiser; he sat thinking and praying in his lonely prison. Yet the key note of Philippians is joy. There is one little outburst of anger in it, but its one leading thought -- the leading thought of the poor, suffering prisoner so full of gratitude for the pecuniary help the Philippians had sent to him -- is Rejoice in the Lord alway; again I will say, Rejoice.

"The key note of the Epistle to the Colossians is Christ all in all; Christ Head over all. The magnificent Epistle to the Ephesians is rich in many leading thoughts. It is the epistle of the church: the church in Christ; the epistle of the heavenlies; the epistle of the mystery and riches of the Gospel. Its key note is grace. The letter to Philemon is a little satellite and annex to the planet of the Colossians. It is a letter to a private Christian gentleman to ask pardon for a runaway Laodicean slave.

"In the last group, the Pastoral Epistles, again we see a change. The thunderstorms of continuous controversy seem to have rolled far into the distance.

The foundations of Christian truths have been laid for ever. St. Paul is writing to Timothy and Titus how they should guide the churches of Ephesus and Crete.

Though here and there we find a grand and pregnant summary of doctrine, the main theme is duty not doctrine, ethics not theology, the holy and wise walk of a Christian pastor in the guidance of the flock.

"Lastly, in the Second to Timothy, we have as it were the last will and testament of Paul. . . .

Through it runs the old mans wailing undertone to his be loved disciple: Come to me; Come quickly; Come before winter; Come and cheer me a little ere I die. Yet drowning this low chord of sorrowings the paeon of quenchless hope and undaunted trust as, to the dear but timid racer, he hands the torch of the Gospel which in his own brave grasp no cowardice had hidden, no carelessness had dimmed, no storms had quenched.

"What an inexhaustible treasure have we here! The First and Second to the Thessalonians, of the Second Coming; the First to the Corinthians, of Christian unity and love; the Second, of consolation and a glimpse into the Apostles very heart; the Galatians, of Christian liberty; the Romans, of justification by faith; Philippians, of joy in sorrow; Colossians, of Christ all in all; Ephesians, of Christ in his church; Philemon, the Magna Charta of emancipation; the First to Timothy and to Titus, the pastors manual; the Second to Timothy, the epistle of courage and exultation and triumph in deep, apparent failure -- of victory in the defeat of lonely death. Again I say, what a treasure have we here! May we go to it to learn humility, tolerance, duty, charity, that man is our brother, that God is love, and to learn that Christ died for our worst enemies no less than for ourselves. If we fail to learn such lessons from the Epistles, we might as well shut them up forever. If God will en lighten the eyes of our hearts by his holy spirit, then in deed shall we know his Word; find in it a Urim and Thummim, ardent with precious stones, and every gem of it under the mystic glory, bright with the oracles of God" (Farrar).

-- P. L. Read

Robes, Garments, Clothing

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment." - Rev. 3:5.

THE FIRST Bible reference to clothing occurs appropriately in Eden. Our first parents disobeyed the plain instructions of the Lord God and partook of the fruit of the tree they were expressly commanded not to eat of, and then suddenly became aware of their guilt and sought to hide themselves by making aprons of fig leaves, and hiding themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the Garden. But no cover could screen them from the wrath of their Creator. Their standing of innocence; their standing of sonship; their standing of fellowship were gone at one stroke, and no efforts of Adam and his descendants have freed or could free them from the dire consequence of divine judgment or recover them their standing.

But though the Lord God excluded them from the life-giving fruits of the Garden, he himself provided them with coats of skins to cover their guilt, and thus gave a hint that only by the sacrifice of life (this supplied the skins or coats) can release from condemnation ever be effected. By the provision of the coats of skin their guilt was only covered, not removed, not cleared. And therein is. the only aspect of atonement to be found in the Old Testament -- sins covered, not pardoned, not cleared.

The primitive root of the words translated atonement, ransom, etc., in the Old Testament has the thought of covering sin, but when the primitive is developed and extended it carries the thought of sacrifice or offering for sin, but the true removal of sin and its penalty will be seen only in the atoning work of Jesus Christ, who came to *put away* sin by the sacrifice of himself. Two lessons are taught by the first occurrence of clothing in the Bible: sins covered, and standing granted; and

it is said that the lesson to be learned in the first occurrence of anything in the Word of God determines the sense in which it should be interpreted in all following instances.

Man has perverted the original teaching. He conveniently disregards the truth that clothing was firstly a covering for sin, but makes much of garments being proof of standing. By color or trimmings man is able to imply to his fellowman that he has better standing. So readily does man judge clothing as a sign of rank, and even of pride, that he is liable to adopt Bible words and say, "Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler." Military dress furnishes a glaring example of this practice--the stars, the tabs, the crowns, the pips and the stripes all declare the rank, and in it all, nothing has been noted that once clothing was a cover for sin. And yet if we recall the charming meaning of the word "candidate" -- clothed in white -- we observe that man has not entirely lost the thought.

THE LORD GOD CLOTHES HIMSELF

Of the Lord God himself it is written, "Thou art clothed with honor and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment" (Psalm 104:1, 2). He clothes himself -- none have given him his standing, his honor, his character, his majesty. It is difficult for man to portray the holiness of God. The best picture is probably to say, as with the Psalmist, that he clothes himself with light; or with the Apostle John that God is light; or with James that he is the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning; or with Paul that whatsoever doth make manifest is light. This garment of light depicts the eternal character of the Lord God, but when he is revealed as taking the garments of vengeance and being clad with zeal as a cloak, we see that he has girded himself, as it were, to leave his throne and intervene directly in the affairs of mankind in judgment. But whereas he invests *himself*, all who act for him have a robe of his providing, to indicate that whatever standing of righteousness or office they hold is given by him. For example the heavenly beings who served him on earth were shown in white garments (Matt. 17:2; 28:3; Acts 1:10). Their garments are dazzling white, the nearest copy that could be made of that light which is the Lord God's garment. These servants are reflections of him and are blessed in that.

GOD'S EARTHLY SERVANTS

His human servants may be clothed to indicate their duties. Thus Aaron,, the first and foremost of Israel's high priests, had elaborate robes of office. These official robes were for glory and for beauty, and not until he was so clothed was he anointed into office. The foundation garment was the white brodered coat of fine linen, teaching that his office was based on the righteousness credited to him as the servant of Jehovah. But though Aaron had specific garments which all Israel would respect, his brother Moses, who was more prominent in the birth of the nation of Israel, had no distinguishing robes.

Heredity offices as kingship and priesthood may be dignified by robes, but a prophet might have arisen out of any family or tribe and had only his message to attract hearers. It might be that the words he chose to clothe his message might determine whether he would be well received. If he modified his words and prophesied smooth things, the nation would hear him, but if the burden of the Lord was upon him, and his message not wrapped up, but were the very words of the Lord God who commissioned him, though he himself were garbed in camel's hair or soft raiment, the people would reject him. Here it might be remembered that a rough garment had become a mark of a prophet, even to some adopting it to deceive (Zech. 13:4).

One cannot proceed further without thinking of John the Baptist, who appeared in the wilderness of Judea clothed in camel's hair raiment (Matt. 3:4). It will be recalled that when in prison he sent to Jesus two of his own disciples to inquire of Jesus, "Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?" (Luke 7:19). When our Lord had sent back the messengers with wonderful evidence in answer, he asked the people what they thought of John. "What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?" (Verses 22-24). Of course not—they would not have exerted themselves to leave the cities to hear so weak a character as a reed! Our Lord repeats the question: "What went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?" A man of standing, denoted by his good clothing?

They are in palaces, not in the wilderness. Clearly they had some other reason for going out of the cities; something more than curiosity was impelling them out. It is recorded that all men were in expectation and mused in their hearts of John (Luke 3:15). Our Lord asked the question the third time: "What went ye out for to see?" And again he anticipates their answer: "A prophet?" Jesus knew that their reason for journeying out to hear John was that they regarded him as a prophet. But they had underestimated him, for he was more than a prophet. He was a herald, and his calling was itself a fulfillment of prophecy. While like previous prophets he spoke of imminent judgment, to him was given the honor of making the most momentous and most joyful of messages, for he had the joy of proclaiming that his successor and superior, the Lamb of God, was contemporary with him! To John also was the honor of baptizing the Son of God! These signal honors made him more than a prophet. Read his joyful words! "The friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled" (John 3:29). Indeed, he was more than a prophet, and in Jesus' own words, "There hath not arisen a greater."

It could be, though not likely, that Israel at first glance regarded John as a prophet because of his traditional garb, but such is deciding by looking on the outward appearance (always a doubtful basis of judgment), but having received him to the extent of being baptized of him, how many took the next step? Had they listened more intently and followed his pointing finger, all would have been well, but it is clear from Luke 7:31-35 that many stopped in their path.

A COMMON FAILING

Reverting to our opening thoughts of clothing being evidence of standing, it may be asked if Christians are prone to judge each other by dress. The quick answer may be: "Of course not!" Yet there is a tendency that way, according to James 2:2, 3. The well-dressed, wellgroomed member receives, irrespective of his standing as a new creature, little niceties of attention bestowed on him which are not afforded to the poorly clad. But if, whether by the world's standards he is well-dressed or not, he has *put on* Christ, he is dressed for every eventuality of life within and without the Church, and none of his brethren will fail to see in him a true follower of his Lord. James, after pointing out that the practice in the synagogue of looking on the outward appearance arose from partiality (2:4), continues that those they were liable to underrate were the very ones whom God has chosen, for he looks on the heart and sees the richness of faith hidden there. And so it happens that the ones having no standing in themselves are the chosen of God. Paul and James agree (1 Cor. 1:27, 28; James 2:5).

THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING GARMENT

These whom God calls (without standing) are the very ones in this parable brought in at the last moment to furnish the feast with guests (Matt. 22:1-14). It tells of a feast rather than a wedding; there is only passing reference to the son; and there is no mention of a bride; the main characters

are the king and the guests. The previous chapter of Matthew closes with the parable of the wicked husbandmen, and the pointed story was not lost on the Pharisees, who perceived that Jesus pictured them, and they sought to lay hands on him. Then follows this parable of the wedding garment spoken to the same hearers, and again the Pharisees realized the story rebuked them (Matt. 22:15). This discernment of the Pharisees that the story was directed against them prompts the question as to whether it was just a story with an immediate lesson, or a prophetic parable, that is, a story which includes some statement of God's purpose which would be fulfilled at a later date.

Matt. 22:6-7 correspond to the conclusion of the previous parable of the wicked husbandmen and are clearly prophetic of judgment soon to come upon them. While the prophetic portion of the parable may not have been noted by the hearers, there was within the story a truth that the Pharisee would not allow. Matt. 22:11-12 tell of the king coming in to see the guests and of his surprise at finding a guest without a wedding garment present at the feast. It was customary for each guest, good and bad, to be given a robe to cover whatever other garments they wore, and so all guests were put on the same footing, and the only ones to stand out at that feast would be the king and his son. To be at the feast without a wedding garment would be disrespectful to the hosts; and now can be seen the Pharisees' position, and that our Lord's teaching was directed to and against them. They were not as other men, and to be called to a feast where all guests, good and bad, were treated alike, was not agreeable to them. Had the king graded the guests and given them the uppermost seats, they would have accepted the honor for thus their righteousness would be acknowledged. But this was a feast to honor the king's son, not his guests.

And now passing forward from the immediate lesson to the Pharisees, we note that the heavenly king had obviously determined a fixed number of guests to honor his Son, and that every guest, every Christian will gladly accept that garment which gives them their right to appear at the feast and honor the King's Son. The feast is now being held; and, of course, none can in fact be present without a wedding garment provided by the King, for our Lord is in the parable supposing a case to teach the lesson, just as in the parable of the sheepfold (John 10) none can actually climb up some other way to enter his fold.

THE ROBE AND OTHER GARMENTS

What is the robe of the parable, or in other words, what is it that puts all guests on a common footing and gives them their standing? There is one robe that the Lord God alone can give, being judge of all. The Bible answers plainly: "Blessed is the man whose sin is *covered*." Justification -- the very thing that the self-righteous Pharisee did not know that he needed. Not all Pharisees were of this calibre; some were of better heart, who even if they did not join the feast would not oppose the king's son. But how blessed are they, perhaps from the highways of the parable, who know in their hearts how continually they need that grace of God that gives them standing and fits them for fellowship as they honor the Son. The longer they live, the more do they realize their need of the robe, and know that nothing they could ever do would enable them to stand *on* their own merit or dispense with this cover for sin. And being a gift from God himself it is perfect, absolutely, and needs no embroidery. It is the foundation garment of all other garments that we may wear, just as the white, brodered coat was the foundation of Aaron's official robes.

Another garment which all Christians must now wear is that mentioned by the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 61:3) "the garment of praise." This is a portion of that prophecy which Jesus at Nazareth said was at that day fulfilled (Luke 4:18-21). He offered this garment of praise to those in Israel heavy in spirit, downcast, and despondent. This comes through the Gospel message, and has been passed on to the Christian Church. This "satisfies our longings as nothing else can do" and in truth we

should be *a* dejected people were we deprived of the hopes which the Gospel engenders. This heaviness of spirit *is* a worldwide malady, and the Christian will fall a victim to it if he forgets or undervalues the source of all goodness and prospect. Put the garment on! Wrap yourself in it, and note how happy you are in the Lord! Remember the two dejected disciples. who trudged to Emmaus and were given the garment by the Stranger who joined them; and back they hurried to Jerusalem to find the others similarly clothed.

Why is it referred to as a garment, while its truth deals with a condition of heart? One reason may be that it is a protective covering for the whole being; and another that it gives each a standing of praise with all the heavenly host who praise their Creator night and day. And still another reason may be that the Christian is judged by his fellowman, who looks on the outward appearance. That being so, if the garment of praise is what he sees, he will have to admit that the Gospel promotes happiness. And still another reason: the old creature is not so visible when clothed in garments supplied by heaven.

Many have had the garment of praise many years. Is it as unfaded as when received? Is it showing signs of wear? In other words, are those joys and satisfactions of the truth we received from the Lord as the alternative to the world's spirit of heaviness, as bright and unfailing? We must remember that this garment is meant for a lifetime's wear, and its warmth and protection can ever be ours. Even if one's thought of praise is limited to the singing of thanks and hymns, much comfort may be had by the wearer. And if our thoughts regard praise in its early meaning of price, valuation, or appraisal, then more satisfaction of heart, more warmth of spirit, may be ours by the right appraisal of our Father and his wonderful works for all his subjects. These gift garments from our Father will fit us all and will never really wear out; but how deplorable it would be were we to echo in our hearts the words of Isaiah 4:1: "We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach."

The robing is not yet complete. There is one more garment to be worn, and that not of God's supply. 1 Peter 5:5 urges us to be clothed with humility. Of the garments the Christian must wear, this is the most uncomfortable, but it has always -to be worn, and will fit as well as the others. Remember, the well-dressed man is not conscious of his. clothing; in fact, it is to him a "habit. The Christian clothed with justification, . praise, and humility is dressed for every occasion.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

For the future, the near future, we will take the precious promise made to, the Church at Sardis. "They shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels" (Rev. 3:4, 5). What an honor to walk with him in white; no more defilements; no, more specks of dust; no more laundry White garments were, as previously mentioned, the normal clothing of those heavenly servants assigned special duties, representing eternal God himself. This is the standing the Church will be given in the resurrection, and according to Rev. 3:11, a crown to complete the picture: "Hold that fast which thou hast," urges John, "that no man take thy crown." According to the old alliterative couplet of, "No cross, no crown," it appeared that the Christian must retain his hold of the cross and himself bear the cross in order to receive the crown of the faithful. That has its truth, but we could also say, "Hold that fast which thou hast" -- retain the garments which give you your standing in Christ now, and in the resurrection you will be clothed in white and enduring garments, with the addition of the crown; or in other words, "clothed with your house which is from heaven."

- B. J. Drinkwater, Eng.

Another "Elder Statesman" Headed Our Way

Alfred A. Hart, of Australia, now visiting with brethren in the British Isles, expects to return to Australia by way of the United States and Canada. On learning of this, we asked him if he would be available for speaking appointments in such Classes of Associated Bible Students as might desire his services. He replied affirmatively. The following letter, sent him in response, is published here, in the belief that it will be of general interest. - Ed. Com.

It is a great pleasure to me, and I know it will be also to my associates in the Institute's ministry, to learn that you are able and willing to undertake the Pilgrim trip suggested in my letter of May 18. As soon as you are able to do so, will you please tell me the date, hour, and place, of your arrival in the United States or Canada, and particulars as to the steamship or airplane you will use.

I come now to doctrinal questions. You say that on some matters of detail your views and ours may not always be in agreement and that, because this is so, you are wondering if your ministry would be welcomed by our Directors, and by the brethren we serve.

This is a question, I think, which must be decided by yourself and the Classes who accept your ministry. For your guidance in reaching a decision, may I offer the following remarks.

1. Your appointments would be listed on the second page of the "Herald" under the caption "Associated Bible Students Classes." You will note that under that caption, paragraph 3 reads:

"The brethren whose appointments are listed below are believed to ~be loyal to the Word of God, clear in its fundamental teachings, and in general harmony with the spirit and purpose of the Institute's ministry. However, this should not be understood as implying that they, any more than our Editorial Committee, endorse each and every expression appearing in this journal.

Nor does it mean that our Institute endorses each and every expression to which they may give utterance in their discourses. Those to whom they minister are counseled to prove all things and to hold fast that which is good."

Presumably you would be acting in good faith in allowing your appointments to be listed under that paragraph.

2. As a matter of fact I find, in discussions and correspondence with brethren, both in this country and abroad, as no doubt you do also in Australia and New Zealand, that several shades of opinion are held on matters on which we have no "Thus saith the Lord." On such matters it is difficult to see how it could be otherwise.

Of itself this should not, and of itself it does not, mar fellowship. When fellowship is disturbed, it is in every case due to other causes and, while not always possible, can generally be traced to such other causes.

3. As you are, of course, aware, the Classes of Associated Bible Students served by our Institute consist of Christians whose enlightenment as to the teachings of the Bible came to them largely, if not altogether, as the result of the ministry of our late Pastor, Brother Russell. Such mental rest and heartfelt satisfaction in the character and purposes of our God, as are revealed in his writings, none of us had ever before enjoyed. We have long been accustomed to think and speak of this additional light on the Word of God as "Present Truth" or "The Divine Plan of the Ages," and while intensely interested in any further unfolding of God's character and plan, and watching

thereunto, the conviction has been strong with us that not until we pass "beyond the veil" are we likely to experience a more abundant feast than that spread before us by our Lord, largely through the consecrated labors of this highly talented and devoted man of God.

Under these circumstances it should be clear to all that the ministry of any brother, whose general attitude towards the life and ministry of Brother Russell is antagonistic, would not be welcomed by our Directors; nor would it be by the Classes of Associated Bible Students with whom the Institute cooperates.

In addition to believing the ministry of a brother undesirable if his attitude towards Brother Russell's ministry were antagonistic, some of the members of the Bible Classes served by us are disposed to regard as undesirable the 'ministry of a brother who, while not antagonistic but friendly to Brother Russell's ministry, is known to hold views which are in conflict with Brother Russell's on such questions as (1) the Covenants (2) the Sin-offering and (3) the Parousia. My own views on these matters, and my position in regard to brethren who differ with me, were stated in an article published in the "Herald" in November, 1940, and again in August, 1946, under the caption "Fellowship and Eldership." The all-important question of Christian Liberty is involved. In recent months our Editorial Committee has approved the publication, in the

"Herald," of a series of articles on this subject which appeared under the caption, "Wise Counsel from a Faithful Pastor," in the December, 1954 to April, 1955 issues.

4. It seems to me that no harm could result, and that some advantage might accrue, both to yourself and the Classes to whom you minister, if you were to occasionally mention your indebtedness to Brother Russell's ministry, and the high regard in which you continue to hold him. This would be particularly appropriate in your private conversations with the brethren.

Also, if I may be permitted to offer a further suggestion, I believe you might dispel much of the fog and allay the suspicions which unfriendly critics are always ready to cast upon the Institute's ministry, if you were to give a fairly prominent place in your discourses to some of the elementary teachings set forth in *The Divine Plan of the Ages*. While it may not be unreasonable, at this late date, for a speaker to assume that his hearers are already very familiar with the teachings set forth in Volume One of the *Scripture Studies*, and that, therefore, their repetition is neither necessary or desirable, except at "public" meetings, the facts are quite often otherwise. There are many newly interested ones in our midst today who are in need of such enlightenment. Moreover, even those long in "this way" continue to derive fresh strength and inspiration as these "old paths" are reviewed in their hearing. I am sure you will agree that, if the minds of the friends had not already been relieved, by Brother Russell, of the superstitions and fears with respect to the character and purposes of God which had formerly burdened them, much of the exhortation to holy living, which you and I and others might give, would fall on unprepared ears. A more sure method, it seems to me, would be to make occasional, if not frequent, reference to such fundamental instruction.

This would not only tie your ministry of exhortation to Brother Russell's ministry of teaching (Rom. 12:7, 8), and thus make the exhortation more effectual, but it would also disarm any suspicions (which I know are unfounded) that you are lacking in appreciation of Brother Russell's life and ministry.

5. In the Watch Tower for August 1, 1913, Brother Russell wrote a very helpful article under the caption "Doctrines More or Less Important," which we have reprinted in the "Herald" more than

once. Therein he distinguished what he understood to be fundamental doctrines from the others, and counseled:

"Our advice to the Lord's dear people everywhere is that they put no yoke upon each other, beyond the fundamentals specified above that otherwise they stand free and leave each other free, and fellows and agree, as much as they can with each other."

This advice our Institute brethren have very generally sought to follow, and have recommended it to our readers as wise counsel from a faithful Pastor. It still seems excellent to us, although not all are able to adopt it, in which case separations inevitably occur, as the Pastor himself, in the same article, indicated would be the case.

May I say, in closing, that it would not have occurred to me to have offered you any of the counsel outlined above, and I certainly would not be doing so now, if you had not, 'first in your letter of June 10, and now again in your letter of July 31, sought it.

A third of a century has elapsed since it was my privilege to meet you in London. You were then a Christian gentleman-one of Christ's gentle men. At that time you needed no counsel from me. Nor can I believe that you need any today. If, as I am sure, the Lord's holy spirit has been operating in your heart "through the years," your likeness to the Master must have increased and the value of your ministry been correspondingly enhanced. Come then, in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. (Rom. 15:29.) And the Lord prosper your journey and ministry.

Your brother by his grace,
Percy L. Read.

The Weekly Prayer, Praise, and Testimony Meeting

"We went ... where prayer was wont to be made." - Acts 16:18.

New subscribers are invited to write us for a free copy of the July "Herald." Therein, on page 109, a brief introduction is given, bearing directly on these "Reprint" excerpts, and on the value of the weekly Testimony Meeting: "the one meeting most helpful in spiritual growth." - Ed. Com.

MANNA TEXT SEPTEMBER 22 - PSALM 23:6

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

It is safe to say that no other collection of poems has accomplished as much good as the Book of Psalms. Its sentiments seem to touch the soul at every turn-in joy, in sorrow. Referring to the Twenty-third Psalm, Beecher wrote, "It is the nightingale among the Psalms. It is small, of a homely feather, singing shyly out of obscurity; but it has filled the air of the whole world with melodious joy"; and Spurgeon said, "This is the Pearl of Psalms, whose soft and pure radiance delights every eye."

The Psalm assures us that, as the Lord's sheep, we shall be provided with green pastures and the cool, refreshing waters of truth. Moreover, while thus being spiritually fed and refreshed, we shall have the peace of God, as is implied in the suggestion that the sheep will lie down in the green pastures. But alas! Not all of the sheep have full confidence in the Shepherd and are fully resigned to have no will but his. Some are continually getting into difficulty, because they neglect the green pastures and cool, refreshing waters of truth found in the Word of God--because, goat-like, they sometimes wander off into the desert, straying far from the Shepherd and attempting to feed themselves on the indigestible things of the present life, on which no spiritual nature can thrive.

Yet even such straying sheep the Shepherd will not leave, if they have become truly his. He goes after them, as the Psalm represents. His rod and his staff are their comfort.

With the rod he beats off their enemies, the wolves that would injure; and with the crook of his staff he wisely and carefully assists the entangled sheep out of its difficulties -out from amongst the cares of this life, the entanglements and deceitfulness of riches, and the besetments of sin and of Satan.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." How precious the thought--God's goodness, God's mercy, with all those who are truly his in Christ -- following us day by day, moment by moment, and according to the Scriptures making all things work together for our good! Then the grand finale is signified, "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever" -- in the heavenly house, of which the Redeemer said, "In my Father's house are many mansions; ... I go to prepare a place for you," and "I will come again and receive you unto myself." Then, at his second coming, with our glorious change, we shall enter the Father's house in the fullest sense of the word, on the spirit plane, which flesh and blood does not inherit.

This shall be the everlasting portion of God's elect -- the Church. The great blessings subsequently to come to the world -- earthly blessings -- will in no sense interfere with, but

enhance, the glory of the Church; for she will be engaged with her Lord in dispensing blessings to the earthly sheep. - Gal. 3:29, *-Reprints*, pp. R5653, R5654.

MANNA TEXT SEPTEMBER 29 -- PROV. 16:5

"Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord."

Pride is very deceitful and frequently cloaks or covers itself with humility. Because of our own imperfections it is well for us not to become judges of others, but merely limit our judgment to the outward manifestations. The Lord says, "By their fruits ye shall know them." (Matt. 7:20.) We are to judge the outward conduct, but we cannot go beyond and say what is of the heart.

An abomination is that which is extremely displeasing -- that which is repulsive. There must be some reason why God declares 'himself thus in opposition to pride. No one really has anything whereof to be proud. As the Apostle suggests in one place (1 Cor. 4:17), "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?"

Evidently the most detestable form of pride is pride in the Church --as though we had made the Plan and could boast in it! We cannot suppose that any kind of pride would be more detestable in God's sight. If any one should continue in such a course, manifestly it would lead him out of the light.

It behooves us all who are associated in the Lord's work to watch ourselves closely, that if we find the slightest tendency in this direction of pride we may stamp it out as we would some contagious disease. We are reminded of the Apostle's words, "Be not many teachers, knowing that we shall receive greater condemnation." Those who have seen the truth clearly and have some talents and opportunities will have the severest *trial*. - *Reprints*, p. R5000.

MANNA TEXT OCTOBER 6 -- LUKE 9:55, 56

"Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them."

An important lesson for all the Lord's people to learn, is that the Lord himself has full charge and direction of the affairs of his Church. Let us learn to trace divine providences in the past, and to appreciate them and to apply them as far as possible, to affairs of the present time; and then to trust the Lord, even where we cannot trace him, knowing that all things shall work together for good to them that love him.

Philip, one of the seven deacons whose choice by the Church is related in Acts 6:5, was one of those whom persecution drove out of Jerusalem. He removed to Samaria, and apparently lost no time in beginning the ministry of the truth, preaching Christ. It will be remembered that "the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans." We remember, further, that it was because our Lord would not enter the City of Samaria, and heal its sick, that the people of that city refused to sell the disciples food, as they passed by. It was in resenting this affront that James and John, the Apostles, said to our Lord, "Wilt thou that we command fire from heaven to consume their city?" Jesus answered, in the words of our text, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

The fact that Philip now came to Samaria, under the leading of divine providence, signifies that the Samaritans were ready to receive the Gospel message. Those who accepted Philip's message, and made a consecration to the Lord, signified it by baptism-immersion-in water, symbolizing the immersion (burial) of their wills into the will of God expressed in Christ-signifying that henceforth they would be dead to self and to the world, and rise to walk in newness of life, as members of the Body of Christ. We read nothing about a creed or a sect or a denominational name, nor about the recording of the names in a denominational register. The early church recognized, as we do, that the important matter is that believers should be *joined to Christ*, and that their names, on this account, should be "written in heaven."

News of God's favor to the Samaritans, and of their acceptance of the Lord, soon reached Jerusalem; and representatives of the whole company of the Apostles went down to Samaria to note the work of the Lord, and, no doubt, to encourage the believers. Peter was one of those sent, and John, the very one who had said, "Lord, wilt thou that we command ire from heaven, to destroy these men and their city?" was the other delegate. How much change the Gospel of Christ had wrought, even in this good man! He had learned of Jesus, and now had the same spirit, which sought not to destroy men's lives but to save them. - *Reprints, pp. R2959-R2961.*

MANNA TEXT OCTOBER 13 -- JAMES 2:18

"I will show thee my faith by my works."

Faith is a mental conviction respecting things not positively proved to the senses, but received on supposedly good authority. There is another quality that seems very closely allied to faith; namely, credulity. The difference between these two appears to be that faith requires, and inquires for, good, sound evidence and authority for its basis. In other words, faith does not jump at conclusions, but makes investigations, and sees that it has some reasonable ground for its existence. If it were solid ground, it would be knowledge. Faith is not knowledge. Therefore faith inquires for reasonable ground upon which to build.

The Apostle in our text says, "I will show Thee my faith by my works." This is part of an argument that he has been putting up. There was a theory prevalent that works amounted to nothing—that it was faith which counted. There was some perversion of St. Paul's teachings that had gotten into circulation. St. Paul had said that by the works of the law no flesh could be justified.

We are not to understand St. James as in any sense of the word opposing St. Paul in this thought, but rather as opposing the wrong deductions from St. Paul's teaching; to wit, "It does not matter what kind of works I have. I have strong faith; God will not pay any attention to the works. I can work the works of the flesh; and having plenty of faith in God, I shall be all right." St. James points out that this is not true. Faith in God and in the forgiveness of sins is proper; but there must be works to accompany it. Just as surely as we have faith, it will manifest itself.

This seems to be the Apostle's argument. Surely we all agree with him, and are seeking to show forth our works. The world cannot appreciate our -faith, because they cannot read our hearts. But God appreciates our faith. Abraham was the father of the faithful. God loved him and treated him as a friend.

But, says the Apostle, God required that Abraham should show his faith by doing some works; he must have some works to prove that he had faith; he will test us by our works as to the strength of our faith. *Reprints, p. R5892.*

MANNA TEXT OCTOBER 20 -- MATT. 10:16

"Be ye wise as serpents."

Presumably all the Lord's people remember the Master's words quoted in our text. Yet apparently very few have appreciated them; for otherwise they would surely be putting this advice into practice-seeking to do the Lord's will. When we think of blundering mistakes which others make and which we ourselves have made in presenting divine truths to others, we are silent. The consolation we find is in the further words of Jesus, that God is sometimes praised by the prattling of the mouths of babes. As children of God we have a period of infancy, of childhood. Let us take such earnest heed to these words of the Master, that we may speedily become acceptable and profitable ambassadors for the King Eternal.

How often we have advised the dear readers of this journal not to choke Christian brethren who, so far as knowledge of God and his Word are concerned, are merest babes, no matter if their consecration dates twenty or thirty years back! When such come in our midst, their presence implies that they are hungering for spiritual food. Shall we stuff them to nausea? Shall we feed them strong meat of divine truth which they cannot appreciate and which will choke them? Or shall we act more wisely and give them meat in due season-spiritual food adapted to their condition?

Some dear friends, full of zeal and greatly appreciated both by the Lord and by myself, are so unwise that they would probably do the cause more good if they never attempted to expound the heavenly things to others-if they would content themselves with merely saying, "I will give you something to read which will make that subject very clear to 'you.'"

In a letter before us a friend writes: "I took friends to our regular meeting several times-people who have read some and manifested some interest. With one accord all our Class began, after the meeting, to acquaint them with all kinds of information, chiefly about . . . Christ's presence, etc., with the result that they did not care to go again. . . . So I am just keeping still and not inviting my friends, believing that it will do them more good to read thoroughly before attending our Class under existing conditions."

This is an exact illustration of a point which we have tried to make several times. We do not wish to discourage the dear friends from preaching the truth. We are merely urging the words of the Master, "Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as *doves*." - *Reprints*, p. R5151.

MANNA TEXT OCTOBER 27 -- PSALM 31:15

"My times are in thy hand."

No affair of life that comes to the Lord's people, sorrow or anguish or distress of mind in any sense, is too small to bring 'to the Lord. "Cast all your care upon the Lord, for he careth for you," is a very consoling and very encouraging suggestion from the Word. However, the Lord's people are to learn more and more distinctly, as their years of membership in God's family and tutelage in the school of Christ go on, that they are not to ask the Lord to guide their efforts according to their wisdom, that they are not to request that their wills shall be done either on earth or in heaven, but rather, telling the Lord their burdens, great and small, they are to realize and appropriate to themselves his sympathy and love, and to apply to their own hearts as a balm the consoling assurances of his Word, that he is both able and willing to make all of their experiences profitable to them if they abide in him with confidence and trust. His grace is sufficient for us, his strength is made perfect in our weakness. - - *Reprints*, pp. R3408, R3409.

The Question Box

"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." - 2 Tim. 2:21.

Question:

I understand that the phrase, "every good work," in this text, may be understood as having reference to the various works of each member of the Church, which will be performed subsequent to their glorification; i.e., after they have attained the Divine nature. Is this true?

Answer:

To my mind the context has nothing in it to support this view. The Apostle is here and throughout the Epistle, counseling Timothy how to live as a faithful pastor should live-not "up there" but "down here."

The context brings to view "a great house" in which some of the vessels are "to honor" and some "to dishonor." (*Moffatt* translates, "some for noble, some for menial service"; *Weymouth*, "some are for specially honorable, and others for common use.")

How to become a vessel "for noble use" is clearly disclosed. It results from a purging or separation from certain evil things mentioned (the profane and vain babblings of 2 Tim. 2:16 and the cankerous word of 2 Tim. 2:17). If a man does in fact thus separate himself, he becomes, not in the Age to come, but *here and now*, such a vessel.

However, regardless of when or where, it is not the vessel but the Master of the great house *who does the work*. Finding us properly *prepared* (by the separating process above described), right in the very place, and in the very condition, in which he can use us, he *does so*, employing us in whatever way he may choose, in *his* work.

Again, in an earthly "great house" its Master would not think of using a plate as (he would a cup or a knife. Neither does the Master of our "great house" do so. He uses us each for the particular task or tasks for which we are fitted. For example: He has often used Brother John to give the friends a great uplift with his "special music"; that he would use Brother Percy in such a capacity could not be supposed, unless he were to first perform a most unlikely miracle. Brother Russell, we agree, was a vessel prepared for a "specially honorable use." Others, doubtless, have had aspirations to be similarly used, which could not be gratified. "The wise steward will seek always to cultivate along the lines of his natural abilities." - See *Manna* Feb. 6, Nov. 26, Dec. 22.

"Kept for the Master's use" is the title of a poem by Frances Ridley Havergal. Its every line has to do with life here on earth. You may perhaps recall it.

You will, of course, have noted the parallel passage, 2 Timothy 3:17 (*Diaglott*); which could refer only to life "down here"; also the language employed in 1 Timothy 5:10 and Titus 3:1.

Continuing with one more thought from the context: Note how the Apostle is still talking about things down hereon this earth, with "young Timothy," as Brother Streeter used to refer to him. *After* purging himself "from these" (evils of 2 Tim. 3:16-17) and *after thus* becoming here and now a vessel "meet for the Master's use," he is to "flee also youthful lusts"; and "avoid foolish and unlearned questions." (2 Tim. 3:22, 23.) Failing to do so, he would soon cease to be a vessel fit for the Master to use in any service, noble or common. He would be cast aside as altogether useless.

Gen. 6:3.

Question:

Will you kindly favor me with an explanation of the statement in Gen. 6:3, viz., ". . . yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years."

Answer:

Two explanations have come to my attention:

1. The life-span of human beings was here reduced from several centuries to a limit of 120 years.
2. The flood would be held back for 120 years, to permit further opportunity for repentance.

Apparently, the first of these views was held by Brother Russell. (S. S. Vol. IV, D604.) However, against it there is urged the fact that quite a number of people, born after the flood, did live in excess of this 120-year limit. - See Gen. 11:1125; 25:7; 35:28; 47:9.

In support of the second view, which appeals to me as being the correct one, it is interesting to note *Leeser's* translation: "yet his days [of grace] shall be a hundred and twenty years." On this verse Leeser has also the following footnote: "Rashi, Aben Ezra, Onkelos, and Mendelssohn give 'his days' the addition 'of grace,' meaning the punishment of the intended flood should be delayed one hundred and twenty years, in hopes of man's repentance."

Rev. 1:1.

Question:

The first verse of the Book of Revelation states that its purpose is to show unto his (Christ's) servants, things that were shortly to come to pass. Who are Christ's servants?

Answer:

Who were the servants of Christ at the time St. John saw the vision?

There can be but one answer, namely, those who were serving him at the time; those among both Jews and Gentiles, who had become Christ's followers; that is to say, Christians.

Some have endeavored to avoid this most natural interpretation of the words by saying that if they were addressed to Christians the passage would have read: "to *show* unto his [God's] sons"; in other words, because the Jews of the previous Age were called servants and not sons, therefore Jews are meant.

This reasoning we find unconvincing. In the first place, the Jews had been rejected, cast off, from favor, at the time St. John saw the vision. They were no longer God's servants. Not only so, but they had never been the servants of *Christ*. They could become the servants of Christ only by receiving him as their Messiah, and by yielding themselves entirely unto him. They would then become sons (of God) who would find their chief delight in the service of Christ.

In the second place, the Only-begotten Son was the Servant in whom, above all others, the Father delighted, and true Christians, following in the Master's footsteps, have always sought to prove their sonship by joyous, devoted, service. "Slave" of Christ Jesus is the term which St. Paul

commonly uses to describe his own relationship to the Master. "Well done, good and faithful *servant*," is the joyous word which all *dutiful sons* hope will yet crown their imperfect labors.

Again, the Revelation was addressed to the seven churches in Asia Minor, not to Jews or assemblies of Jews living in Asia Minor. At the close of each of the seven messages, we hear the Savior saying: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches"; not what the spirit saith unto the Jews at that time, nor even what the spirit might say for the benefit of Jews who might be living at some future time.

Another very significant matter, as proving that Christians and only Christians are addressed in this prophecy is that the ascription of praise recorded in Rev. 1:5 is none other than Christian praise, as the words, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," very plainly teach. The very next statement of the Apostle shows who are referred to in this passage. It is those who are to be made kings and priests. Are the kings and priests unto Christ's God and Father to be Jews taken out from either this Gospel Age or any Age prior to, or to follow this? Surely not.

Again, St. John speaks of himself as a brother and companion in tribulation of those whom he addresses. Who can believe he was speaking of the Jews as his brothers? He was a prisoner on the Isle of Patmos, not because he had been confessing the Jewish faith, but because of his testimony concerning Jesus the Christ.

It has been well said "that Jews ... have no more to do with this prophecy than 'they have to do with the Epistle to the Ephesians. They may possibly be alluded to in the one, as in the other, but it is not for them; it is not mainly concerned with them; it is for us; Christians alone were Christ's servants, in the days of Domitian, when John saw and heard these things; . . . and they take the children's bread to give to outsiders, who would rob the Church of this, her Lord's last gift."

The conclusion to which we are led, that the Revelation is a prophecy which relates to Christian rather than to Jewish experiences, is strongly confirmed by the description of its witnessing and suffering saints, who "overcame by the blood of the Lamb," (Rev. 12:11) who kept "the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:11, 17) who "keep the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12) and are the "martyrs of Jesus" (Rev. 17:6) slain "for the witness of Jesus." (Rev. 20:4.) Who can those be who have the testimony of Jesus, who keep the faith of Jesus, and are the martyrs of Jesus, but Christians? On every ground the conclusion is inevitable that the Revelation is a Christian, not a Jewish, prophecy; in other words, it relates to the experiences of the Christian Church, in both its militant and its triumphant stages.

- P. L. Read.

"All in Thy Hand"

"My times' are in Thy hand:"
My God, I wish them there;
My life, my *friends*, my *soul*, I leave
Entirely to Thy care.

"My times are in Thy hand,'
Whatever *they* may be;
Pleasing or painful, dark or bright,
As best may seem to Thee.

"My times are in Thy hand,'
Why should I doubt or fear?
My Father's hand *will* never cause
His child a needless tear."

Recently Deceased

Bro. J. Ferguson, Glasgow, Scot. (April).
Bro. J. A. Graeves, E. Orange, N. J. (Aug.)
Sr. Anna Lechnick, Aurora, Ill. (Aug.).
Bro. J. H. Marx, Baltimore, Md. (Aug.).
Bro. J. W. McLearn, Lexington, Mass. (Aug.)
Sr. G. Moore, Southsea, Eng. (June).