

# THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

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## Christmas Time

*"Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" - Luke 2:10.*

ONCE again, in the Lord's providence, the season of Christmas is approaching, recalling precious memories of the past; and more especially, to most of us who read these pages, memories of our childhood and the family festivities that are so indissolubly linked with the observance of Christmas in the home. Although, as in so many other instances to-day, the hallowed associations of this season have become corrupted with commercialism, and, in the case of Christmas, with the pleasures of eating and drinking, the joy of this season, even thus expressed, is fundamental, deeply rooted in the announcement of the angel quoted above, at the birth of Jesus. It is fitting, therefore, that we should rejoice in a special manner, as we ponder over all that the festival of Christmas means to us.

## THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

In this connection *may* it not be that we miss much by ignoring, as is so frequently done, the significance, at the appropriate seasons, of the various events comprehended in the Christian year? Would it not be to our spiritual enrichment, for instance, if at Whitsuntide we not only participated in the public holiday\* usually marking that occasion, but as Christians availed ourselves of the opportunity to meditate in a special way on that further gift of our gracious God, viz., the Holy Spirit, and all that Pentecost meant to the *early* Church and to us? And so with the other great events of the Christian Calendar; would not our spiritual lives be nurtured, in these days of rush and bustle, by more particular contemplation at such seasons, of the significance to us of the events thus brought to mind?

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\* Whitsuntide is a legal holiday in the British Isles - Ed. Com.

## CHRISTMAS OBSERVANCE

If it be objected that the evidence available indicates that the birth of Jesus took place about October 1st of our present calendar and not December 25th, we reply that such fact in no wise lessens the importance of the latter day to all Christians, inasmuch as in such case it marks the time of the Annunciation to Mary by the angel Gabriel of such birth in due time, and the conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary by the operation of the Holy Spirit. The one event was as necessary and important as the other in the outworking of the Divine Plan, and both are equally a cause of rejoicing, being essential elements of the one operation whereby "The Word was made flesh" - John 1:14.

These two aspects are presented together in that familiar prophecy: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given" (Isaiah 9:6), whereby we learn that the coming of the long-promised seed of the woman (a Child is *born*) is the result of a Son being *given*. "God so loves the world that he gave his only-begotten Son" (John 3.16). What lessons throng upon us as we contemplate that mystery! Herein is revealed to us the marvelous love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ. The whole plan of God is based upon the fact that God is the great giver, giving even to the end of time. Again, in those few words of the prophet we have enshrined both the pre-human existence of our Lord (he was already God's Son when given), and the virgin birth-a child is born in circumstances unique in the experience of the human family. How much more is involved in this transaction, and how much greater cause of rejoicing, when we thus perceive the divine power operating through human instrumentality for the accomplishment of the designed end! And what deeper understanding is imparted to that age-long assurance, "The seed of the *woman* shall bruise the serpent's head" (Gen. 3.15), in the light of that subsequent development of the virgin birth. Should not this awake us to the possibility that many other statements of Scripture apparently quite plain to us now, may in the light of further development of God's eternal purpose be seen later to convey a much greater conception than at present we are able to apprehend. In this *way* the prayer voiced in the words of the well-known hymn in reference to the Bible finds continuing fulfillment: -

"And still new beauties may we see,  
And still increasing light!"

We are indebted to two of the Evangelists for accounts of events which are inseparably connected in our minds with the celebration of Christmas. Luke, the travel companion of St. Paul, and his "beloved physician" (Col. 4.14), tells us that he was at pains to set forth the events "in order"- Luke 1:3. To him we are indebted for the account of the birth of John the Baptist, the herald of the Messiah, in the old age of Zechariah and Elizabeth-a child, like the Christ himself; specially brought into the world for a particular purpose, though not, of course, in analogous circumstances, in the manifold wisdom of God.

## **THE ANNUNCIATION**

And then we have the beautiful story of the Annunciation by the angel Gabriel to the meek and lowly Mary of the conception and birth of Jesus. In this record, the faith and humble acceptance of God's will on the part of the woman Mary is in contrast to the doubting attitude in much less testing circumstances of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist. The old age of Elizabeth and her- husband was indeed a test of faith in God's pronouncement of the birth to them of a son, but there was a precedent for this in the familiar record of the birth of Isaac in similar circumstances, a story well known to every Jew. Yet Zechariah in doubt queried, "Whereby shall I know this, for I am an old man and my wife well stricken in years?" But in the unique position in which Mary was placed she meekly said in complete resignation to God's will, and doubtless mindful of all that it might bring upon her in the way of reproach, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto

me according to thy word" - Luke 1:38. And as it was at the beginning, so was it at the end of our Lord's earthly life, in connection with another Mary. As one has said:

"Not she with traitrous kiss her Savior stung,  
Not she denied him with unholy tongue;  
She, while apostles shrank, could danger brave,  
Last at his cross, and earliest at his grave."

It is Luke who has related for us the visit of Mary to Elizabeth, and preserved for us the Songs of Zechariah and Mary, the "Jubilate Deo" and the "Magnificat", which enrich the worship of many today.

## **THE BIRTH OF JESUS**

And then at last we come to the birth of Jesus, in the lowliest possible circumstances, yet attested by a power that moved the whole Roman Empire to accomplish the desired end. From Luke 2:4 we learn that Mary with her affianced husband resided at Nazareth in Galilee, whereas prophecy, as the priests and scribes pointed out to King Herod, (Matt. 2:3-6) indicated Bethlehem, the city of David, in Judea, as the birthplace of the Messiah - Mic. 5:2. So, under Divine direction the ponderous machinery of the vast Roman Empire was put into motion by the promulgation on the part of the Emperor Caesar Augustus of an edict for the enrollment (not taxing) of his Empire's inhabitants (Luke 2:1. RSV.) As a result, Joseph and Mary, both of the lineage of David, were made to leave Nazareth temporarily and report at Bethlehem, the divine timing, as always, being so perfect that their arrival at that city coincided with the due date of delivery by Mary of her firstborn son, the infant Jesus. Truly, "God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform."

Although of the house of David in lineage, it is evident that both Joseph and Mary were in very poor circumstances, Joseph being the carpenter of the obscure village of Nazareth and in the eyes of the world of little consequence. Hence, when as a result of the Emperor's edict the town of Bethlehem became thronged with an unwonted number of visitors, and accommodation there was fully taxed, they received no consideration either on account of their lineage which presumably the rest of the visitors shared, or of Mary's condition, and were forced, for the time being at any rate, to find shelter in the stabling of the khan or inn. It was in such humble circumstances that Mary brought forth her firstborn son, and the Savior of the world was born. The infant Jesus was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in one of the mangers for his first cradle.

What a fruitful subject of meditation here presents itself! The operation of divine wisdom on the one hand choosing such a medium for the introduction into this sinful world of the Divine Son as Israel's Messiah and the Savior of mankind. It was so entirely different from the expectation of the world in general, and of the Jews in particular, whose anticipations and visions of their Messiah were based upon human rather than divine conceptions. On the other hand what infinite condescension and love was thus manifested by the Son who, although in the words of St. Paul, existed originally "in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." - Phil. 2:6, 7, RSV.

## **HEAVENLY WITNESSES**

Nevertheless, although the outward circumstances of the birth of Jesus were so lowly, Luke does not fail to record that the event was acclaimed by a heavenly host. Following the announcement of the birth by an angel to simple shepherds watching their flocks in the fields nigh to Bethlehem

by night, an angelic chorus by "a multitude of the heavenly host" praised God singing, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men." As the echoes of the angelic song died away, the shepherds said among themselves, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." And so they hastened to the royal city and found Mary and Joseph, with the babe in the manger as the angel had said. Thus the first of mankind to worship and welcome the Lord Christ were humble shepherds.

Luke then proceeds to record the circumcision of the infant Jesus on the eighth day in accordance with the covenant God made with Abraham-Gen. 17:9-14. After this, Mary and Joseph remained at Bethlehem until the *days* of the purification of the mother after childbirth had been accomplished. In accord with Lev. 12:2-6, this was an additional period of 33 days in connection with the birth of a male child, a total of 40 days in all. At the conclusion of this period, the infant Jesus, being Mary's firstborn, was presented before the Lord in the temple and duly sanctified as the law provided (Ex. 13:2), whilst the stipulated offering in connection with the birth of a child (Lev. 12: 6-8) was made. This was usually a lamb but here again the poverty of Joseph and Mary is brought under notice, the alternative of "a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons" in the case of the poor, being availed of by them (Luke 2:24); thus emphasizing the lowly circumstances of the home into which the only-begotten Son of God was born. And then Luke explicitly states (Luke 2:39), "when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord" (occupying, as we have seen, a period of 40 days) "they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth."

### **HIS NAME JESUS**

Let us now for a few moments ponder on the deep significance to the human family of the advent into this sinful world of the Logos, "the Word made flesh" (John 1:14). The angel's pronouncement to Joseph when the latter was pondering over his discovery of Mary's condition was, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:20, 21). The Greek form "Jesus" (Jesous) is equivalent to and has the same meaning as the Hebrew Joshua or Jehoshua. This may readily be seen by reference to Heb. 4:8, where the name Jesus obviously refers to Joshua of the Old Testament, who led the people of Israel from the wilderness into the promised land and subdued the nations dwelling therein. In either case the meaning is "The Salvation of Jehovah," and sets forth, as do the majority of names in the Scriptures, the character, or the office, or the destiny of the individual named. Thus this child to be born of Mary was designated by the angel to be the long-promised Savior provided by the God of Israel to save his people from their sins. In Matthew's Gospel -- the gospel of the King and Kingdom as it relates more particularly to Israel -- the Savior is the Savior of *his* people as foretold by Israel's prophets. Through Isaiah, for instance, God had declared to Israel, "I am the LORD thy God, *the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior*; I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee," and proceeds to foretell another deliverance (salvation) for his people in the future (Isaiah 43:3-7) (See also 49:26; 60:16). It was on the basis of such passages that the Jews derived their conceptions and hopes of a Savior for Israel, a mighty Deliverer from *external* foes; and this helps us to understand their bitter antagonism to the Apostle Paul as announcer of glad tidings to the Gentiles. This was exemplified in connection with his speech from the top of the stairs leading from the Temple area in Jerusalem to the Roman castle. He was heard with attention until he related how in vision he had been commissioned by the Lord Jesus: "Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles;" when the Jews at once lifted up their voices and cried, "Away with such an one from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live" (Acts 22:21, 22).

But although our Lord was of the Seed of David according to the flesh and thus related to Israel, he was also the seed of the woman (Gal. 4:4), through whom blessing is to come eventually to "all the families of the earth," bringing "the desire of all nations" (Hag. 2:7). Thus by taking upon himself our humanity, he became a fitting counterpart -- a Ransom or corresponding price -- not for the Jew's only, or even for Israel as a whole, but for the whole race of men involved in Adam's fall. This of course, would have been in vain if he himself had been involved in that fall and its, penalty for disobedience, viz. death. But by means of his birth by a virgin, Mary -- the seed of the *woman* yet not "in Adam" -- the Divine purpose was accomplished and so Jesus came "in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin" but "condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3), being "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:27).

### **JESUS OUR LORD**

In concluding this Christmas meditation, however, we remind ourselves that the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem was but one link in a chain of connected events leading up to the grand climax of human blessing, each of which is important and necessary to this end. So we cannot linger at the manger, but must proceed to the contemplation of the purpose for which the child was born, viz. that in due time Christ might die for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6). "He by the grace of God tasted death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). Yet neither may we remain indefinitely at the Cross, for as Paul states, "if Christ be not raised ... ye are yet in your sins; then also they which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (1 Cor. 15:14-18) Yes, thank God, the Christian religion does not invite us to make a yearly pilgrimage to the tomb of its dead prophet, but announces, "Christ is risen indeed." "He was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). Again, having been raised from the dead, to be subject no more to death, he is to come again, to bring to Israel, to be again restored to Divine favor, and to the world in general in due time, the blessings secured step by step by the faithful course of the Logos, who became flesh, died and was subsequently glorified. Thus the birth of our Lord which we celebrate at the Christmas season was the necessary prelude to the three "R's" of the Christian faith, viz. Ransom (Redemption), Resurrection, and Return; and without an appreciation of all three and the marvelous joy awaiting mankind as a result, our present joy at Christmastide would be but a hollow mockery.

In the meantime, those privileged to understand the purpose of the present age, viz. the development of the mystery (sacred secret) of God, i.e. Christ (Col. 2.2), await with patience the consummation of that feature of God's Plan of the Ages, and endeavor to do their part in becoming "conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29), utilizing both the joys and sorrows of life to that end, assured that "all things are working together for good to those who love God, the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Such have the Master's joy fulfilled in themselves at all seasons and under all circumstances, in accordance with St. Paul's exhortation, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice!" - Phil. 4:4.

- *Contributed.*

## "As the Lightning Cometh"

*"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." - Matt. 24:27.*

THIS is a widely-discussed text. It is frequently used to support either of two considerably variant expectations regarding the manner of the Second Advent. That Advent, think some, is to be sudden and spectacular, as a flash of lightning. Not so, say others; lightning does not emerge out of the east and shine unto the west. Our Lord must have referred to the bright shining of the sun, and his coming of gradual perception to the minds of men, even as the dawn steals upon sleepers unawares, broadening gradually into full day.

Which view is correct?

Consider first the context. By way of warning to his disciples, Jesus told them that they were not to heed any assertion that he had come "in the desert" nor yet "in the secret chambers"; "For," said he, "AS the lightning . . . so shall also the *parousia* [presence] of the Son of man be." The meaning of this is clear; his presence, which we know will extend over a period of a thousand years, is to be universally known and perceived.

It is obvious that Jesus was likening his presence to something in nature with which they were already familiar, and had themselves witnessed a hundred times before. His use of the analogy would have been futile otherwise. We need then to determine the precise nature of the allusion.

It is sometimes suggested that the Greek word here used, "*astrape*," does not mean "lightning" but it does mean "bright shining," and in this text refers to the sun. Put like this, the suggestion is not altogether accurate. "*Astrape*" is the regular Greek term for lightning, as reference to any lexicon will show. But the dictionary definition of a word is not sufficient unless the usage of that word in the literature and language of the period in question is also taken into consideration. Only thus may the true meaning of recorded utterances be appreciated.

The English word "lightning" is restricted in its use to that flash of light which accompanies the electrical discharges associated with a thunderstorm. The term, however, is a derivation of "lightening," any dazzling or radiant display of light, and a trace of this older English usage appears in Luke 17:24. Just so did the Greek "*astrape*" refer, in the current usage of the time, to any bright or intense display of light, and the question as to whether lightning or other form was concerned has to be decided by the nature of the allusion, or by the context.

The word occurs quite often in the New Testament, in the Greek version of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) and in the Apocrypha, and since all these represent the language as it was spoken in the first century, their testimony can be admitted.

The following texts are quoted to show how "*astrape*," both as a noun and as a verb, has been translated in a number of instances and from these it is apparent that its general application is as suggested above.

### **From the New Testament.**

Acts 9:3 - "There *shined round about* him a light from heaven."

Acts 22:6 - "*There shone* from heaven a great light round about me."

Luke 24:4 - "Two men stood by them in *shining* garments."

Luke 11:36 - "As when the *bright shining* of a candle doth give thee light. "

Luke 9:29 - "His raiment was white and *glistening*."

Luke 10:18 - "I beheld Satan as *lightning* fall from heaven."

Matt. 28:3 - "His countenance was like *lightning*."

### **From the Old Testament.**

Deut. 32:41 - "If I whet *my glittering* sword."

Dan. 10:6 - "His face as the appearance of *lightning*."

Hab. 3:11 - "At the shining of thy *glittering* spear."

### **From the Apocrypha.**

Wisd. 11:18 - "Wild beasts . . . shooting horrible *sparkles* out of their eyes."

4 Macc. 4:10 - "There appeared from heaven angels riding on horseback *all radiant* in armour. "

These examples go to show that "lightning" is not necessarily the meaning of the word in Matt. 24:27. Jesus apparently referred to a noteworthy radiance or shining of light that was known to emerge from the east and cover the sky to the west. The rising of the sun is, of course, immediately suggested, but, it is only when the nature of a Palestinian sunrise is appreciated that the force of the allusion can be perceived. The gradualness of an English sunrise would not meet the sense of the Greek "*astrape*." We dwellers in the temperate zone are familiar with the slow increase of daylight, occupying the space of an hour or more, which constitutes our dawn, but this is true only of our own latitude. The farther one proceeds towards the tropics the more rapid is the transition from total darkness to full daylight, until at the Equator the change is practically instantaneous. To appreciate the meaning of Jesus' words, therefore, we must visualize to ourselves a Palestinian dawn.

A few quotations from travelers who have actually witnessed such a sunrise will be of interest in this connection.

H. V. Morton, in his book "*In the steps of the Master*" says: "As I sat on the stone thinking of these things, a light began to fill the sky. The sun rises over Jerusalem from behind the Mount of

Olives. I turned my back on the city and, looking up over the Mount, saw a great fan of light pulsing up from the east. The fire filled the sky and turned the little clouds in its path to pink and gold, but the high ridge of the Mount, almost black against the palpitating light, hid the sun from view. . . . The sun topped the crest of the Mount of Olives, and looking again towards Jerusalem, I saw the highest buildings gilded with light though the wall was yet unlit. In a few seconds a flood of light fell over the city, ran down the wall and into the valley of the Kedron. It swept up the stony flanks of the opposite valley, and I felt my face and my hands warm in its light."

"How often must Jesus and the disciples have watched this splendid sight from the Mount of Olives. They must have seen the city ramparts light up with the first rays of the sun. They must have seen, just above the Garden of Gethsemane, the towering white and gold mass of the Temple. They must have seen a priest come out on a pinnacle, as he came every morning, to look towards the east and report, before the sacrifice of the day, 'The sun shineth already!' They might even have heard in the still air of dawn the daily cry from the assembled priests: 'Is the sky lit up as far as Hebron?', and the daily response of the watcher from the pinnacle: 'It is lit up as far as Hebron!'"

The same writer describes sunrise at Gaza, a little to the south of Jerusalem:

"And now, as we went onwards, I saw a gathering tumult in the east. A white, palpitating light was filling the sky. It was like something approaching at great speed, a mighty army with its chariots and its horsemen. Swords of light thrust their way upwards, catching stray clouds and turning them to banners of pink and gold. Then, like an orange flung into the air, the sun leapt up, fully armed, into the sky: it was warm, and the dead earth was instantly, vividly, and rather violently, alive."

Lord James Bryce, describing his ascent of Mount Ararat in 1876, thus describes sunrise as seen from his position halfway up the mountain; (*Transcaucasia and Ararat*):

"About 3 a.m. there suddenly sprang up, from behind the Median mountains, the morning star, shedding a light such as no star ever gives in these northern climes of ours, a light that almost outshone the moon. An hour later it began to pale in the first faint flush of yellowish light that spread over the eastern heaven, and first the rocky masses above us, then Little Ararat, throwing behind him a gigantic shadow, then the long lines of mountains beyond the Araxes, became revealed, while the wide Araxes plains still lay dim and shadowy below. One by one the stars died out as the yellow turned to a deeper glow that shot forth in long streamers, rosy fingers hovering above the snows on the mighty cone; till at last there came upon the topmost slope, six thousand feet above us, a sudden blush of pink. Swiftly it floated down the eastern face, and touched and kindled the rocks just above us. Then the sun flamed out, and in a moment the Araxes valley and all the hollows of the savage ridges we were crossing were flooded with overpowering light."

A more recent traveler, Leonard Pearson, in *"Through the Holy Land"* (1937) gives this picture of dawn at Baalbec, in the north of Palestine.

"To see the sun rise at Baalbec (three and a half thousand feet above the sea) is a sight indeed. For the view we climb on the flat roof of the hotel. What a picture with the crimson glow of the rising sun tinting the horizon! The snow-topped Lebanons are a blaze of pink, and yellow on the lower level. Now the rays of the sun flood-light the mighty ruins of the famous temples.... Look at the giant columns caressed by the warm sun's glow. Now the pink tinge has gone, yet it seems to remain in the valley."



Our own booklet "The Promise of His Presence" may be quoted here by way of concluding these descriptions of the "*astrape*."

"The sun comes up suddenly, and a few minutes suffices to transform the velvety blackness of tropical night into the full brilliance of the day. It is for this reason that very few inhabitants of the land actually witness the sun's rising, for their sleep is broken only by its dazzling beams as they encircle the earth. There is no long and gradual dawn as in more temperate countries. The first sign of approaching day is a grayness in the eastern sky, a grayness for which -- in Jerusalem at least -- both city watchmen and the priests in the Temple were waiting and watching; the watchmen, because it indicated the end of their period of service, and the priests, because as soon as light had flooded the land it was their duty to offer the morning sacrifice. Hence the constant Scriptural association of the coming day with the "watchers," and the meaning of that cryptic message, "Watchman, what of the night? . . . The morning cometh, BUT IT IS YET DARK" (Isa. 21. 11-12 French version). Within a few minutes the grayness is streaked with shafts of pink, and then, so rapidly as almost to bewilder the unaccustomed observer, a glorious effulgence of golden light spreads fan-wise from the east and moves visibly across the sky, turning the clouds in its path to pink and white and bathing the entire land in a wonderful rosy glow. It was at this time that the priest, stationed on a pinnacle of the Temple, cried out in a loud voice that the light was come and had overspread the land, and his companions below immediately commenced the ritual of the morning sacrifice. Within a few minutes more the full blaze of day is pouring down upon a people quickly arising from sleep and betaking themselves to their accustomed tasks.

"It is this emergence of light from the east, followed quickly by the sun itself, to which reference is made in Mal. 4:2, where the promise is that the 'Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings' -- the great fan of glory spreading over the sky as the sun rises being not inaptly likened to the pinions of some great celestial creature. Our Lord's own allusion to the '*astrape*' emerging from the east and sweeping the sky to the west is undoubtedly a reference to that same phenomenon which his disciples, early risers as they must have been and accustomed to remaining awake all night, were thoroughly accustomed to witness."

On the basis of the foregoing, then, it might be concluded that Jesus intended us to understand His *Parousia* as an event to be perceived first by the "watchers," those on the mountain tops, the walls of Jerusalem, pinnacles of the Temple. These would be in no uncertainty, they would know full well what the light in the sky portended, and straightway make proclamation "The Lord is come." Whilst that proclamation was still going forth, the full blaze of his presence would overspread the earth and become evident to all people. The two phases of the Second Advent are adequately included in this metaphor; the first phase, in which the Lord, coming into the space and time framework of our earthly habitation "as a thief," gathers his own whilst the world is as yet unaware of the fact, and the second phase in which his presence is so patently obvious to all men that no man can deny it. It is from this latter point that his reign over the earth commences and the Kingdom is to date. The assumption of power by Jesus must be a real assumption of power and this cannot be until the kingdoms of this world have actually and literally given place to his Kingdom. That *will* be after the glorification of the Church and therefore after the first phase of his Advent has been completed.

- A. O. Hudson.

## Elias Shall First Come

*"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest [i. e. or else} I come and smite the earth with a curse." -- Mal. 4:5, 6.*

*IN The Time is at Hand*, written in 1889, the author, Charles T. Russell, undertakes to present "the evidences of the time being at hand for the establishment of Messiah's Kingdom in the earth." In considering those evidences, he was careful to observe that "this prophecy, showing the priority of Elijah's coming, must not be overlooked."

His exposition awakened much interest when it first appeared. Today, in the light of two world wars and their present-day aftermath, the subject of which it treats may be seen in clearer perspective. Because of this, we have condensed his luminous exposition in the following paragraphs,, in the conviction that its review at this time cannot fail to profit the reader.

Malachi's prophecy, the last message sent by Jehovah to Israel, seems to have deeply impressed them--especially the last two chapters, which particularly refer to Messiah's coming, and to the special trials which the day of the Lord's presence would bring with it. (See Mal. 3:1-3, 13-18; 4:1-6.) Gathering from this that the testing would be peculiar, they took comfort from the last verses quoted above, which promised that Elijah the prophet, who had once converted the entire nation from the worship of Baal back to the worship of God, would come again to prepare them, before this severe testing time which Messiah's coming would bring.

This prophecy was not *fulfilled* at the first advent of our Lord--neither the portion which relates to Messiah nor that which refers to Elijah. The reference of the prophecy is evidently to the second advent; to the coming of the "Messenger of the Covenant" in glory and power; and to the testing and great trouble of the Day of the Lord at that time. However, Christ's presentation to typical Israel, and the great trouble which came upon them as a nation when they rejected him, was, as God had foreseen and intended, another shadow which further illustrated in many particulars the things presented in this prophecy. John the Immerser, in the spirit of Elijah, did a work for Israel similar to that of the Elijah promised, but failed of success; and, as a result, trouble (a curse) upon that nation followed. The real Elijah referred to by the prophet was to do a great work for the whole "earth," to prepare all mankind for the second advent; and he will for a time also fail of success, and as a result the great time of trouble (the curse) will smite the whole earth.

Since the coming of Elijah mentioned by the prophet is to be "*before*" this "great and dreadful Day of Jehovah," it is important to show here that *Elijah has come*. He has failed to turn the hearts of the world to childlikeness and to the [true] wisdom of the just; and therefore the great time of trouble comes, as God foresaw and foretold. In it, God will teach mankind by severe and bitter experiences lessons they need to learn thoroughly, to prepare them to gratefully accept the Christ, Jehovah's Messenger of the New Covenant -- with all the just arrangements, laws, etc., of that covenant.

At the first advent, many of God's promises and plans were carried out on a small scale with one nation, Israel, as an illustration of the greater, grander realities to be accomplished at Christ's second coming. And as the miracles, cures, etc., represented the greater works of the Millennial Age, and our Lord's riding on the ass as King represented his assuming the greater power, majesty and honor at the second advent as King of kings and Lord of lords, so "the *man* Christ

Jesus" and his little band of disciples represented the Lord of Glory highly exalted, associated with the saints, his bride and co-heirs, at the second advent. And *thus* John the Baptist and his disciples engaged in the same work with and under him, in attempting to convert Israel and to prepare them to receive Messiah, *represented the real Elijah* (the true Christian Church), whose work has been to *attempt* the conversion of the world before the coming of Messiah to the world-the spiritual Lord of glory and King of kings. John the Immerser, in the spirit and power of Elijah, failed to reform Israel, and, as a consequence (Matt. 27:12), Israel rejected Jesus in the flesh, and brought upon themselves a great "*day of vengeance*," trouble and wrath. (Luke 21:22.) So, likewise, only on the larger scale, the real and greater *Elijah* has failed to convert and prepare the world to receive the King of Glory, and now, consequently, the great day of wrath must come upon the world, to melt and mellow and humble and prepare all to cry out from the heart-Hosannah! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah!

It is thus seen that the *Church in the flesh* (the Christ in the flesh, Head and Body) is the Elijah or forerunner of the *Church in glory*, Jehovah's Anointed. Not the nominal church, but the really consecrated Church, which on the other side of the tomb will be the great Anointed Deliverer, -- these constitute the Elijah. Their mission is to reprove error and sin, and to point to the coming Kingdom of glory. Our Lord Jesus and the Apostles, and all the faithful in Christ Jesus since, are of this great antitypical Elijah, prophet or teacher -- the same class (Head and Body) which shall shortly compose the King of Glory. The work in which the Church is now engaged is merely preliminary to its future work, so far as the reforming of the world is concerned. In its kingly office the Church shall accomplish for the world what it fails to do as the Elijah teacher.

Let us not be misunderstood: We have heretofore shown that God's Plan does not extend to the converting of the world during the Gospel Age. He did not intend it to do so, but merely designed the selection and trial of the

Church, now, and the blessing of the world through the Church, the Christ, in an age to follow this. We do not contradict this when we say that the Elijah (Christ in the flesh) *has tried* to convert the world and failed, except in bringing about partial reforms, though God knew and foretold that our mission to the world would be largely a failure, except in selecting a choice little flock, yet, knowing that the effort would react favorably upon ourselves, his commission to us through our Lord was to *try* to convert the world, when he said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the good tidings to every creature." Seeing that he foretold our present failure, but our future success, when he shall glorify and endue us with divine power, we are enabled to rejoice even while viewing the comparative failure of the past eighteen centuries, realizing that the labor of the true Elijah class has not been in vain, but has served the divine purpose in developing the true Church while bearing witness before the world-which will profit it in due time.

John the Baptist was not actually Elijah returned to earth, neither is the Church; but as it was true of John, that he did an Elijah work to Israel (Luke 1:17) to prepare them, and introduced the Lord in the flesh, so it is true of the Church-it does the predicted Elijah work "in the spirit and power of Elijah" to the world, and announces our Lord's second advent in almost the same words which John used at the first advent: "There standeth one among you whom ye know not.... He it is who, coming after me, is superior to me." - John 1:26, 27.

All could not receive John's testimony nor realize that he was forerunner to the King in the flesh. Had they done so, they would have been prepared thereby to receive Jesus as their Messiah. To as many of them as could and did accept John's message and receive Christ, to these John *did do* the Elijah work. As our Lord said to them of John (Matt. 11:14), "If ye will *receive it*, this is the Elias

which was to come;" though John and his work did not complete the prediction concerning Elijah, even as our Lord in the *flesh* did not fulfill all that was predicted of Messiah. He was, to all who could receive it, Jehovah's Anointed, even before he had finished his work of sacrifice, or had been glorified, or had come again in the exercise of the great office of Messiah or Deliverer. John, at the first advent, was really a finishing out, in a measure, of the type begun in the person and work of Elijah; and John's work at the first advent foreshadowed the closing work of the Church at the second advent. These, the feet of Christ in the flesh -- the feet of Elijah -- announce the Kingdom. (Isa. 52:7.) To those who "*can receive it*" we announce, as at hand, the reign of the Christ glorified; and likewise *to those who "can receive it"* we have pointed out the foretold antitypical Elijah. Some, probably, will not "receive it," but will still look for some one man to fulfill Malachi's predictions, and will "know not the time of their visitation" until the great day of trouble is burning as an oven.

It will be seen, then, that the failure of the Elijah (the Christ, in the flesh) to convert and restore the world was as much a foreseen result as was John's failure to convert Israel. Nevertheless it will be the same Elijah class, only glorified and empowered, which will during the Millennial Age bless and teach the world and restore all things, as promised by the mouth of all the holy prophets (Acts 3:19-21); only in the name and likeness the Elijah type ceases with our earthly career. In harmony with this were our Lord's words in reply to his disciples who asked, "Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come?" Our Lord's answer does not attempt a full explanation of Elijah's being a type and John a continuation of the same while at the same time a shadowy fulfillment of it, etc. -- things which the disciples were not then prepared to understand, and which moreover were not then due to be understood; and hence, while pointing out John's *failure* as a partial fulfillment of the prophecy, our Lord adds, "Elijah truly shall come, and *restore all things.*" (Matt. 17:11.) Evidently he had in mind his own glorious work of the coming age, associated with his glorified "body" which the Gospel Age would select and test. He was looking beyond the veil to the Millennial Age, and seeing the Elijah class caught up in the chariots of fire in power and great glory -- spiritual exaltation.

*A woman* is the figure used when the Church alone is referred to, separate from her Lord and Head. Separate and distinct from her Lord, the Bridegroom, she is an espoused virgin. But in this instance a man, Elijah, is the figure used, because the work prefigured is not the work of the Church separate from her Lord, but the one work of both. Our Lord was the Head and Forerunner of the Church in the flesh (the Elijah), as truly as he is Head of the Church triumphant--the Christ. Other instances in which a man is the figure used, when *a joint* work of Christ Jesus and his body, the Church, is typified, are numerous: for instance, Aaron and all his successors in the office of Chief Priest represented the Lord and the under priests, members of his body; Melchisedec similarly represented the *whole body* in glory; so did Moses, David and Solomon. Hence the use of Elijah as a figure, in representing a *united* work of Christ and the Church, is in harmony with the Scripture usage.

In view of the class which Elijah represented, how forcibly eloquent was that "*vision*" which the Lord showed to the three disciples on the mount of transfiguration. (Matt. 17:1-9.) It was a vision of the coming Kingdom, Peter tells us. (2 Pet. 1:16-18.) Our Lord, transfigured, appeared radiant before their eyes, while a figure of Moses represented the Mosaic or Law Dispensation and a figure of Elijah represented the Gospel or Christian Dispensation. Both dispensations look toward and point out and speak of the sacrifice and sufferings of Christ and the glory to follow.

We have no desire to draw before the mind a dark picture; but it is necessary that the saints should be at least in some measure forewarned of impending events, that when such come to pass they may not be alarmed or disheartened, but being fore-armed may know how to meet them; and

also that they may more fully appreciate the blessings of the present, so as diligently to "work while *it is called* day; for the night [a much darker time in comparison with -the present, *called day*) cometh, *wherein no man CAN WORK.*"

The present little season, before the storm-cloud bursts upon the world, is a most favorable time for the work of the Elijah class, and corresponds to the successful days of both Elijah and John. It is favorable for personal growth in grace and knowledge, and also for the spread of the truth-the most favorable time that has ever been known.

What may we expect between the present comparatively favorable time and the coming blessed time of unhindered righteousness? Will it continue to be as favorable as the present for labor in the vineyard-or more so, or less so? Let us notice what these types indicate; for since our Lord has directed our attention to them, whatever we find in the life and experience of either Elijah or John which seems to fit well to the experience of the Church, and to the testimony regarding her future earthly course, we are justified in recognizing as typical.

Elijah was separated from earthly scenes by a chariot of fire, representative of the spiritual glory and exaltation awaiting, at the end of the earthly racecourse, those of the Church alive and remaining to the last days. But we should also remember that it was by a whirlwind or storm that he was taken away; and a storm is the symbol of trouble, as much as the fiery chariot is a figure of victory and glorious escape from that trouble.

John the Baptist's closing experiences *are* still more clearly marked by the trouble feature. Though he was not obeyed by the people (Matt. 17:12), they for a short time recognized him as a servant and prophet of God (John 5: 35); yet when he had announced the presence of Messiah his influence soon began to wane, as he had testified it would do, saying of Christ, "He must increase, but I must decrease." So it must be in the end of this Age: the work of the John class (the Elijah class) closes with the announcement that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, and that the King is present. This is now being done; and the exact words of John's testimony apply with equal force at this time of the Lord's second advent: "There standeth one *among you* [present] whom ye know not," "whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge [cleanse] his [threshing] floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire"-the great time of trouble. - John 1:26; Matt. 3:12.\*

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\* To the day of his death (*October 31, 1916*) Pastor Russell believed and taught that October *1914* marked the close of the Times of the Gentiles, and that the period of our Lord's second advent began forty years before. However, as he himself stated, "there *is* enough uncertainty about the matter of chronology to make *it* a matter of faith rather than of positive knowledge." (*Reprints R5336.*) Because of this measure of uncertainty, when, in 1912, he listed various items of his faith, and unqualifiedly affirmed them, in some instances challenging statements to the contrary as unscriptural, he was careful to state his belief as to the date of our Lord's return in much more guarded phrase: "We do not affirm, dogmatically, that he came in *1874*, but we *say* that to us it *is* the evident teaching of the Scriptures." (*Rep. R4956.*) Would that some *of* his over-zealous followers could learn from his wise and faithful example here! Moreover, in the Foreword to *S.S. Vol. II*, written October *1, 1916*, still more light was beginning to break through, as his keen, spiritual mind pondered the unfolding scene: "We could not, *of course*, know in *1889*, whether the date *1914*, so clearly marked in the Bible as the end *of* the Gentile lease *of* power or permission to rule the world, would mean that they would be fully out *of* power at that time, or whether, their lease expiring, their eviction would begin. The latter we perceive to be the Lord's program; and promptly in August *1914*, the Gentile kingdoms referred to in the prophecy began the present great struggle, which, according to the Bible, *will* culminate in the complete overthrow of all human government, opening the way for the *full* establishment of the Kingdom *of* God's dear Son."

As John decreased -- his special work being accomplished when his message was delivered--so the Church in the flesh must decrease when its last message is given, until the last member has laid down his consecrated life, and passed beyond the veil into "glory," thenceforth to be a member of the glorious, reigning Christ. As John said that Jesus must increase, so now that the real Kingdom is about to be established we can confidently say that the King is present, and that his kingdom must increase until it fills the earth. And John's announcement of the "harvest" work -- the gathering of the wheat, and the trouble coming upon the chaff--also finds its parallel in the present time.

John's liberty was restrained soon after the delivery of his message, announcing the *present One* and the work before him; and he was cast into prison because he had reproved the king of improper union with a woman (Matt. 14:4). And though the faithful children of God have often pointed out that union between the Church and the civil power is out of order, being in the Scriptures termed harlotry (Rev. 17:5), and though in a great measure the world has withdrawn from the churches, the union still exists, and the Scriptures seem to point out that, in the time of trouble approaching, the nominal churches, professedly virgins of Christ, will be on the side of the kings of the earth, and united to them; and the true Church, like its type, John the Baptist, will be unpopular and restrained of liberty, because of faithfulness in opposing and condemning error.

The same necessity for restricting liberty on political and social questions will probably be supposed to apply equally to freedom of expression on religious questions, which really lie at the foundation of all liberty. It would not be surprising if a "strong government," a monarchy, would some day replace this present Great Republic; and it is entirely probable that one common standard of religious belief will be deemed expedient and will be promulgated, to teach outside of which will be treated and punished as a political offense. Such a persecution would not only furnish, in the end or harvest of this age, another parallel to the harvest of the Jewish age (Acts 4:10-13, 23-30; Acts 5:29-41; Acts 11:19),\* but would also give a wider and deeper significance to the words of the Apostles Paul and John (2 Tim. 4:3; Rev. 13:17), and to the typical illustrations of the close of the earthly career of the true Church, as represented in Elijah's whirlwind departure and John the Baptist's imprisonment and beheading.

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\* Subsequent to writing *The Time is at Hand*, the author was led to see that the harvest of the Gospel Age extended beyond forty years and that there is no way of determining its exact length. Under the caption "Our Mistake Respecting the Harvest," he wrote (*September 1, 1916*): "We imagined that the harvest work of gathering the Church would be accomplished before the end of the Gentile Times; but nothing in the Bible so said. Our thought was purely an inference, and now we see that it was an unjustified one." - *Reprints R5950*.

Two lessons we may draw from this to advantage, whether future developments shall prove that we have read the prophetic testimony correctly or incorrectly; and they are these: First, we should be so prepared, so armed and so thoroughly furnished with the invincible truth, that persecution would move us only to greater zeal, and not lead us through surprise or fear to lower our standard, nor to surrender when the kings of the earth stand up, and, with the religious rulers of the people, are gathered against us, and against the truths to which God has granted us the privilege of witnessing, as his servants and ambassadors. (1 John 3:1.) Second, such reflections relative to the future, contrasted with the privileges of the present, should serve to stimulate every consecrated child of God to make diligent use of the present grand harvest opportunities and privileges, remembering that "he that reapeth receiveth wages," as truly as he that planted and watered, and that now is pre-eminently a time for *gathering fruit* unto eternal life. The little quiet of the present favorable time, with its greater liberties and advantages in every way, is divinely arranged in

order to the sealing of the true servants of God in their foreheads (intellectually, with the truth).- Rev. 7:3.

"Let the 'little while' between In its golden light be seen."

The Master saith: "Work while it is *called* day; for the night cometh, when no man can work."  
"Labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life."

So, then, in the present due time, we see that Elijah the prophet came, as foretold, before the great and notable day of the Lord. And we hear his closing testimony, like that of John, saying, "There standeth one among you whom ye know not"-whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor: he will gather his wheat into the garner, and burn up the tares [as tares -- not as men) with unquenchable fire in the great time of trouble-the curse, which must needs come to prepare the way of the Great King of kings. He must increase, but the Elijah must decrease and finally be entirely restrained. Not only do we hear this testimony from a few of the Elijah class now, but every one who is of the Elijah class will ere long be found proclaiming this message and engaging in the Elijah work. Such only as are thus faithful will be of the glorified Elijah, and permitted to share in the work of restitution of all things which, during the Millennium, will be a grand success. A depth of significance is found in the meaning of the name *Elijah*. It signifies *God* [mighty-one) of *Jehovah*. It is thus a fitting name for the Lord's Anointed, whose grand work will be to restore all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

## "Men Ought Always to Pray"

*And He stake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. - Luke 18:1.*

*(Continued from last issue.)*

PRAYER presumes a life of close and intimate communion and fellowship with God, and with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is because real prayer brings us into direct contact with the Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, that the great Adversary -- the Devil, Satan -- uses every possible means to keep us from a life of prayer. Prayer is as necessary and vital to the Christian as the air we breathe is to our bodily well-being. Yet real prayer is one of the most neglected exercises in the Christian Church as well as in the lives of individual Christians! Why is there such a lack of *power* in the lives of so many Christians, and in the great majority of Christian communities today? Of how few can it be said that men take note "that they have been with Jesus," or that they are bright and shining lights in the world, "holding forth the word of life"! So often, alas, the light has grown dim and flickering, and the spirit of slumber has descended upon whole communities of professing Christians. *It is because prayer has been neglected-that* which should have the foremost place in our lives and in the Church has so often been relegated to the time that is left to us when every other task has been accomplished. The Prayer-life involves every moment of the twenty-four hours of every day, during which there is an awareness of the Father's presence, but it is no less important that *definite times should be set aside* when we shut ourselves away from every earthly contact to meditate upon our Father's Word, and commune with him in earnest prayer and supplication.

One is reminded of the little child who delights to be where mother is, busy with her needlework or whatever it may be; or with father, in the garden or in his study. The child is intent and occupied with its own small tasks -- playing with its toys, or reading the storybook; nevertheless, there is an awareness of the parent's presence which brings contentment and quiet joy. And how comforting to know that in the realization of that presence it can speak of its problems and frequent causes of joy and gladness. That is how it should be with every true child of God; indeed, there must be a continual awareness of the Father's presence *at all times*, wherever he may be. There are times, however, when the child will leave its tasks, upon which it has been so intent -- and, forgetful of all else, will delight to sit at the parent's feet in sweet and quiet converse. There it will pour out all that has been troubling the mind; there it will give expression to the love and gratitude in its heart, and there it will listen to words of advice and admonition. So with the child of God; there *must be* seasons set apart when our "transitory toys" are cast aside; when we leave the tasks upon which we have been so intent-yes, *even the work we have been doing for our Father-and in* quiet solitude at his feet express our love and appreciation of his goodness toward us, tell him of our troubles and trials, our pleas for forgiveness, our desires for the future, and our need for guidance and direction. But O, how often is it true that we are so taken up with "the cares of this life," and oftentimes so active and busy in the Lord's service, that we find only time to rush into his presence, to ask his blessing upon *our* projects and efforts-the things which *we* think ought to be done and upon which we have set our hearts-and then hurriedly to leave the Throne of Grace in order to resume our self-appointed tasks!

Yes, there are many "Marthas" in the world today, sincerely loving the Lord and loved by him, but "cumbered with much serving," and sometimes envious of the "Marys" who seem to find time to choose "the better part" of close fellowship and communion with the Lord. How few are those who will *make time* to "sit at Jesus' feet." Yet we can all be "Marys" if we will but put "first



things first" and come apart to rest awhile and sit at the Master's feet in the spirit of prayer and communion. Brethren in Christ, if you have tried it-if you have made it your determination that *not a single day* shall pass without its "Quiet Hour" of unhurried and sweet prayer and meditation, alone with the Father and the Lord Jesus, you will know that nothing is lost of efficiency in the Lord's service, and not a single *needful* task is left undone. You will know-and in no other way is it possible to know-that *prayer is the secret of power!* Isn't that the great need of us all -- POWER to command the blessings which God has promised to his people? O how we need to ask our Father's forgiveness that we have been so tardy in our prayers. *A praying Christian is a live Christian, and a praying church is a live church!*

For our profit we would consider a few experiences in the early Church which so manifestly reveal that *prayer is a source of power and vitality* which nothing can withstand. In that early Church we have the model and pattern for the whole Church throughout this Gospel dispensation, and how much we need the simplicity, the Divine energy, the joy, and the power of those early Christians! Have we ever fully appreciated the fact that Pentecost was an answer to prayer? That wondrous outpouring of God's holy spirit came upon a group of disciples assembled in an upper room, *as a result of their prayers!* But it may be objected: "That cannot be, for the holy spirit descended upon the disciples as the result of a promise made by the Lord Jesus while he was yet with them, for he had told them that 'the Comforter' would come after his departure from them." How true that is, but *is not the essence of prayer a claim upon the promises made by God and the Lord Jesus?* It was the Lord himself who once said to his disciples: "*If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?*" (Luke 11:13.) Here is the record concerning those waiting disciples in Jerusalem: "*And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.*" (Acts 1:13, 14, R.S.V.) What a wonderful Prayer-meeting that was! The first little "ecclesia" of Christ's brethren were gathered together, *and their first meeting was a prayer meeting.* "*These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.*" And what must have been the burden of their prayers? Surely that the holy spirit should come upon them! Would there have been a Pentecostal outpouring if those disciples had not longed for it, and *prayed for it* with all their hearts? No, indeed. The answer did not come immediately, but they continued in prayer over a period of several days, and at last the answer came. "*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place ... and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.*" (Acts 2:1, 4.) What an example to us of true prayer, persevering and importunate *prayer -- and what an answer!* Would our prayers be less effectual today if we prayed as those disciples must have prayed? It has sometimes been said that there was only one outpouring of the spirit, but however that may be, *if we would receive the full measure of the spirit in our hearts and lives, it will only be by prayer.*

The record continues, and reveals Peter boldly and courageously giving his first great discourse, which so manifestly declares the enlightening influence of the spirit, and its power. As a result of this witness and the call to repentance, about 3,000 souls were added to the Church in one day-and what is the very first thing we read about them? "*And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*" (Acts 2:42, R.S.V.) Yes, *prayer* occupied a prominent place in their devotions. Acts 3 opens with these words: "*Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.*" The ninth hour was the time of the evening prayer in the Temple, and Peter and John make their way to the place of prayer-the "court" of the Temple -- that place so loved by Jesus, and from which he angrily cast out the money-changers with those who sold and bought, saying, "*It is written, 'My house shall be*

*called the, house of prayer."* The record continues to tell of the miracle wrought by Peter and John, and of the opportunity thus afforded them to witness for the Lord, first of all to the people and then before the leaders of Israel. With what boldness they speak of their crucified Lord and Master! *"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they wondered; and they recognized that they had been with Jesus."* (Acts 4:13, R.S.V.) Not many days before this "they all forsook him and fled." Immediately after their release from custody, we find them again assembled with their "own company" *in prayer. "And now Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to Thy servants to speak Thy word with all boldness."* (Acts 4:29.) Notice what follows, as recorded in Acts 4:31: *"And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness."* Yes indeed, it was *prayer* which brought grace and strength, courage and enlightenment to our brethren of the early Church. It was *prayer* which had wrought the great transformation in their lives. Are we to think that prayer will accomplish less in this our day, or that it is less necessary today than it was then, or is it that God's people have failed to use sufficiently the means by which alone we can manifest the power of God in our lives?

The record in "The Acts" continues to tell of Stephen's bold defense and martyrdom, and of the resulting severe persecution which scattered the brethren throughout the then known world. The news reached Jerusalem that many in Samaria were responding to the Gospel message, and it was decided that Peter and John should visit them. *"Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit."* (Acts 8:14.) How prominent was this aspect of *prayer* in the experiences of those brethren, and how continually they recalled the words of the Lord Jesus: *"How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."* Yes, *prayer* is the secret of the holy spirit's indwelling in the hearts and lives of God's people! Acts 9 then tells of Saul the persecutor and his conversion. How important it is to note where the Lord himself placed the emphasis in his message to Ananias: *"And the Lord said to him, 'Rise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for a man of Tarsus named Saul; for behold, he is praying.'" (Acts 9:11.)* It would seem that it was this for which the Lord had been looking, longing, and waiting: *"Behold, he prayeth."* That is what our Lord is looking for, longing for, and waiting for today; he wants our prayers, "the broken and contrite heart," the listening ear, and our petitions for the things which can only be granted through prayer. Again, in this same chapter is the record of the miracle wrought by Peter *as an answer to prayer. "Peter . . . knelt down and prayed; then turning to the body he said, 'Tabitha, rise.' And she opened her eyes."* (Acts 9:40.) Dorcas was restored to life as an answer to prayer! So *prayer* entered into every aspect in the experiences of those early Christians.

*(To be continued)*

*- Edwin Allbon, Eng.*

## A Pilgrim's Reverie

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven." - Psalm 107:30.

WHAT would life be without its bridges and its fords, its resting spots where we recline beneath the blossoming boughs and beside the still waters of quietness? What would it be without its royal summits where we gather to our hearts visions of the Home Land that lies beyond the tiresome journey, its halls of friendship where hand grips hand with the earnestness of true love, and heart becomes knit to heart in confidence and trust? And last, but not least, how important its starting places, where having taken a retrospective glance along the years and braced our hearts with new determination, we once more turn our feet toward the road, buoyed up with an optimism which whispers to us that bigger, better, nobler days lie ahead of us, and that some day we shall reach the Palace of Blessedness, the place of life's consummation, which lies beyond the arduous country of endeavor. How often the mind travels back - away back - to air castles built in sunny childhood and buoyant youth, for "The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts." Old scenes and memories, how they throng upon us and will not be lightly thrust aside. And through the varying way how well we know that a great hand has been guiding our steps, leading us into the light of an unfading and wondrous hope.

"So long Thy power hath blessed me, sure it still  
Will lead me on  
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till  
The night is gone."

Ah, yes, for there shall be no night there, and the end shall pay us a thousand fold for all the toil and struggle of the way. Thus we cogitate, and in these meditations which, effulgent in silvery light, brighten the night like stars, we find the quiescence and the joy of faith, affording comfort through every day and keeping alive that hope which is as an "anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil. What a forepicture of the Ages of Glory when the cold blasts of selfishness and pride shall be shut out from human hearts, and the purest goodwill and love shall glow and fill the world with the light of God.

And as the years have passed, the advance of time has meant much to some of us. We are richer in experience because of the days and hours God has spread before us. We think our love has a farther range, a fuller sweep, a stronger and truer grip on "Love divine all loves excelling." Our sympathies have broadened, our faith has deepened, our hope bears iridescent hues of a brighter glow. Our craving for righteousness is more intense. We have moved farther up the stream of truth; we are less from its source than we were years ago. Nor have we forgotten to ask, What is truth? If formerly we held up a gem and said, "This is truth," we have learned to qualify the statement. No more we affirm, "The gem that I hold is all the truth, but the gem that you hold is not truth." Rather we now say, "My gem has truth." So the tree has water, but is not water, and the earth has gold, but is not gold, and the diamond has beauty, but is not beauty. Even so my pearl has truth, but truth has not stopped with my pearl. There are other pearls, rare and wondrous pearls. Some day we'll know more about them, for now "we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

And so we have no desire to be severe with the other finders of gems, for the ocean of truth is great, and God is not severe with us. He is glad we have our gem, because when we gaze upon its

liquid-like fairness, we catch glimpses of his face, and he smiles upon us from out the gem and we are glad because of the smile.

And as we think of these things, our hearts warm more to the journey before us, more to our fellow-travelers, more to the possibility of complete victory, more to the goal. Love has taken his royal seat. We see him crowned. He is there to stay, yea, to subdue all things unto himself. His accents are very gentle as he speaks to us, and his countenance is lit with "the light that never was on sea or land." He stretches out his arms and blessing drops from his hands upon the world of men.

Welcome, love. Your kingship of our minds is monarchy exalted and sublime. Ever wield your scepter o'er us. In every moment of the day we need you, we need your power, your peace, your assuagement of life's woes.

- W. Sargent

## The Question Box

*"The God of all grace, who hath called us to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect (katartizo), stablish, strengthen, settle you." "Be ye perfect (teleios), even as your Father in heaven is perfect (teleios)." - 1 Pet. 5:10; Matt. 5:48.*

*Question:*

In the article on "Scriptural Perfection", published in the August-September *Herald*, pages 121-123, the writer says that there are two words in the original, translated in our English Bible by the one word "perfect" and that one of these two Greek words has the sense of *finish* or *complete* and the other of being *perfectly adjusted*. Could you tell me what these two Greek words are?

*Answer:*

One is *teleios* (Strong's Concordance No. SG5046.) The other is *katartizo* (Strong's Concordance No. SG2675.) They appear in the two texts above quoted which also appeared at the head of the article to which you refer.

- P. L. Read

## THE TRUE CHURCH

### I.

ONE Sabbath morn I roamed astray,  
And asked a Pilgrim for the way:  
"O, tell me, whither shall I search,  
That I may find the one true Church?"  
He answered, "Search the world around;  
The one true Church is never found.  
Yon ivy on the abbey wall  
Makes fair the falsest Church of all."  
But, fearing he had told me wrong,  
I cried, "Behold the entering throng!"  
He answered, "If a Church be true,  
It hath not many, but a few!"  
Around a font the people pressed,  
And crossed themselves on brow and breast.  
"A cross so light to bear," he cried,  
"Is not of Christ, the Crucified!  
Each forehead, frowning, sheds it off:  
Christ's cross abides through scowl and scoff!"  
We entered at the open door,  
And saw men kneeling on the floor;  
Faint candle, by the daylight dimmed,  
As if by foolish virgins trimmed;  
Fair statues of the saints, as white  
As now their robes are, in God's sight;  
Stained windows, casting down a beam,  
Like Jacob's ladder in the dream.  
The Pilgrim gazed from nave to roof,  
And, frowning, uttered this reproof:  
"Alas! who is it that understands  
God's Temple is not made with hands?"

### II.

We walked in ferns so wet with dew  
They plashed our garments trailing through,  
And came upon a church whose dome  
Upheld a cross, but not for Rome.  
We brushed a cobweb from a pane,  
And watched the service in the fane.  
"Do prayers," he asked, "the more avail,  
If offered at an altar rail?  
Does water sprinkled from a bowl,  
Wash any sin from any soul?  
Do tongues that taste the bread and wine  
Speak truer after such a sign?"  
Just then, upon a maple spray,

Two orioles perched, and piped a lay,  
Until the gold beneath their throats  
Shook molten in their mellow notes.  
Resounding from the church, a psalm  
Rolled, quivering, through the outer calm.  
"Both choirs," said I, "are in accord,  
For both give praises to the Lord."  
"The birds," he answered, "chant a song  
Without a note of sin or wrong:  
The church's anthem is a strain  
Of human guilt and mortal pain."  
The orioles and the organ ceased,  
And in the pulpit rose the priest.  
The Pilgrim whispered in my ear,  
"It profits not to tarry here."  
"He speaks no error," answered I,  
"He teaches that the living die;  
The dead arise; and both are true;  
Both wholesome doctrines; neither new."  
The Pilgrim said, "He strikes a blow  
At wrongs that perished long ago;  
But covers with a shielding phrase  
The living sins of present days."  
We turned away among the tombs--  
A tangled place of briars and blooms.  
I spelled the legends on the stones:  
Beneath reposed the martyrs' bones,  
The bodies which the rack once brake  
In witness for the dear Lord's sake,  
The ashes gathered from the pyres  
Of saints whose zeal our soul inspires.  
The Pilgrim murmured as we passed,  
"So gained they all the crown at last.  
Men lose it now through looking back,  
To find it at the stake, the rack;  
The rack and stake are old with grime;  
God's touchstone is the living time!"

### III.

We passed where poplars, gaunt and tall,  
Let twice their length of shadow fall.  
Then rose a meeting-house in view,  
Of bleached and weather-beaten hue.  
Men, plain of garb and pure of heart,  
Divided church and world apart.  
Nor did they vex the silent air  
With any sound of hymn or prayer.  
God's finger to their lips they pressed,  
Till each man kissed it and was blessed.  
I asked, "Is this the true Church, then?"

He answered, "Nay, a sect of men:  
And sects that shut their doors in pride  
Shut God and half His saints outside.  
The gates of Heaven, the Scriptures say,  
Stand open wide, by night and day.  
So, then, to enter, is there need  
To carry key of church or creed?"

#### IV.

Still following where the highway led,  
Till elms made arches overhead,  
We saw a spire and weathercock,  
And snow-white church upon a rock--  
A rock, where centuries before,  
Came sea-tossed pilgrims to the shore.  
My sandals straightway I unbound,  
Because the place was holy ground.  
I cried, "One church at last I find,  
That fetters not the human mind."  
"This church," said he, "is like the rest;  
For all are good, but none is best."

#### V.

Then far from every church we strayed--  
Save Nature's pillared aisles of shade.  
The squirrels ran to see us pass,  
And God's sweet breath was on the grass.  
I challenged all the creeds, and sought  
What truth, or lie, or both, they taught.  
I asked, "Had Augustine a fault?"  
The Pilgrim gazed at heaven's high vault,  
And answered, "Can a mortal eye  
Contain the sphere of all the sky?"  
I said, "The circle is too wide."  
"God's truth is wider!" he replied.  
"Though Augustine was on his knee,  
He saw how little he could see;  
Though Luther sought with burning heart,  
He caught the glory but in part;  
Though Calvin opened wide his soul,  
He comprehended not the whole.  
Not Luther, Calvin, Augustine,  
Saw visions such as I have seen."  
While yet he spake, a rapture stole  
Through all my still inquiring soul.  
I looked upon His holy brow,  
Entreating, "Tell me, who art THOU?"  
But such a splendor filled the place,  
I knew it was the Lord's own face!

I was a sinner, and afraid!  
I knelt in dust, and thus I prayed:  
"O Christ, the Lord! end Thou my search,  
And lead me to the one true Church."  
He spake as never man may speak--  
"The one true Church thou shalt not seek,  
Seek thou, forevermore, instead,  
To find the one true Christ, its Head!"  
The Lord then vanished from my sight,  
And left me standing in the light.

- *Poems of Dawn*

## Recently Deceased

Sr. G. Cronbaugh, Phoenix, Ariz. - (Aug.)  
Bro. W. C. Douglas, Toronto, Ont. - (Oct.)  
Sr. L. N. Layman, Germantown, Ohio - (Oct.)  
Sr. Ida Belle Morgan, Dayton, Ohio - (Oct.)  
Bro. I. Page Noll, Los Angeles, Cal. - (Oct.)

*"Till the day break, and the shadows flee away."*