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World Population, Food Problems and the Hope of Mankind

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." - John 5:28-29.

ONE OF the propositions which "to us the Scriptures teach" is stated on the second page of this journal in the following words:

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

Our older readers are aware that nearly fifty years ago, in the celebrated Eaton-Russell debates, these Millennial hopes were criticized by Dr. Eaton on the grounds that there was not sufficient land surface on the earth to accommodate all the people who had lived from Adam's day to ours, so that a literal resurrection, as human beings on this earth, was an impossibility. His words, in part, were as follows:

"This Millennial doctrine encounters a very serious difficulty. If the world's population had doubled each century for the past sixty -- which seems a very reasonable estimate -- the present population of the earth would be two and one-third quintillions of people. That would cover over the fifty millions of square miles of land surface on this globe with people as thickly as they could stand, four thousand deep. If each were five feet high, they would reach up into the sky nearly four miles. No doubt enough people have been born to make that number."

It will also be recalled that Pastor C. T. Russell, in debate with Dr. Eaton, thoroughly examined this criticism and showed:

(1) That Dr. Eaton's estimate of two and one-third quintillions of people was a gross exaggeration -- seventy million times too large -- that a figure somewhere between ten and thirty billions would be much closer; and

(2) That the ability of the earth to furnish all those with habitation and food was ample; and that this was especially true when taking into consideration the Lord's promise that in the coming Millennial day the earth would yield her increase, and her desert and wilderness places become like Eden, the garden of the Lord. - Ezek. 34:27; Isa. 51:3; 35:1.

However, it will also be recalled that after proving the position of Anti-millennialists to be untenable, Pastor Russell extended the discussion to show not only that the Millennium must come, but that it must come *soon*; that if it were to be delayed (not fifty thousand years, as Dr. Eaton expected, but) only one thousand, it would be literally impossible;* and that even if it were delayed only three *hundred* years, "there would be room for an argument on the possibility of God's promise of restitution of all things spoken." - Acts 3:1921.

*In this he was in agreement with the celebrated naturalist, Charles Darwin, who, in his "Origin of Species," wrote: "In less than one thousand years, there would literally not be standing room for his [man's] progeny."

Consequently, since God's promise is sure, the result of the examination of the question was to strengthen faith in the belief that its fulfillment, *due to commence at the Second Advent of Christ, could not be long delayed. The time was, indeed, at hand.*

Pastor Russell's defense of the Bible doctrine of the World's Millennial Hope took place nearly fifty years ago -- October 29, 1903 to be exact. What is the outlook today? Today it seems that his 300-year computation is confirmed by competent writers on the subject, as witness the following:

Guy Irving Burch, in the *Population Bulletin*** states that "in 1940 the population of the earth was a little *over* two billion."

** Published by the Population Reference Bureau, a non-profit scientific educational organization located in Washington, D. C., founded in 1929 for the purposes of gathering, correlating, and distributing population data.

Kingsley Davis, of the Office of Population Research, Princeton University, is quoted by Burch as saying: "Should the present global population continue to increase at the same rate that prevailed between 1900 and 1940, the earth would hold over twenty-one billion by the year 2240"; --that is to say, by approximately 300 years from now, (Pastor Russell's estimate was sixteen billion in 300 years from 1903.)

Warren S. Thompson, in his book, *Danger Spots in World Population*, tells us: "China might send forth six million emigrants each year and still increase in population at home."

The Red Cross Commission to China in 1928-29 said: "It is estimated that if all the ships in the world now engaged in passenger traffic on the seven seas were withdrawn from their usual routes and were devoted solely to transporting Chinese from their native land to other countries, they could not keep up with the growth of population."

Guy Irving Burch, commenting on the last two items quoted, says: "The above statements may be applied also to India, and if the high death rate of Russia were lowered to the level of that of the United States, the statement might be applied in a decade or so to that country." And again: "We have mentioned before . . . that if India's death rate were lowered to the level of that of the United States, with her present birth rate India could populate at least five earths as large as ours, in a single century. The same statement applies to China." Elsewhere he writes: "In India, according to British official records, the population increased fifty Million between the 1930 and 1940 census periods, notwithstanding that one out of four die on or before their second birthday."

WORLD POPULATION AND THE "FOUR FREEDOMS"

"Today the whole world is divided between human slavery and human freedom-between pagan brutality and the Christian ideal. We choose human freedom-which is the Christian ideal."

Thus spake the late President Roosevelt in his historic address on the evening of May 28, 1941. Then, after observing that it was possible for the seeds of the present menace to human liberty to be planted and allowed to grow only in a world such as the postwar world of the 1920's, which "we will not (again) accept," he went on to say, "We will accept only a world consecrated to freedom of speech and expression-freedom of every person to worship God in his own way-freedom from want and freedom from terrorism."

The next day Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden stated Britain's war aims. He called for permanent guarantee of the "four freedoms" mentioned by President Roosevelt. He spoke of "a new moral order" in the world, in which there will be no starving peoples, in which nations will trade at will and to mutual advantage, in which there will be work for all and assurances that chaos must not come again to this world. He envisioned the establishment of social security in all lands.

Unfortunately details as to how this "new moral order" is to be secured and the "four freedoms" established do not appear in either speech. Nor are we ourselves able to furnish these details, much as we can and do sympathize with their objectives. We know only that God has, indeed, promised a world such as these statesmen hoped to see -- one even better than they hoped, and that his promise is certain of fulfillment. Meantime we are determined not to *think* or *speak* or *do* anything that might tend to discourage in the slightest *degree*, those who, in high places, are filled with such ideals, and who are laboring to accomplish them in the earth. On the contrary let us pray for such, and, to the extent of our ability, cooperate with them to those ends. - 1 Tim. 2:1-3.

We must not, however, indulge in wishful thinking; and that is what millions of people do engage in, when they suppose that good-will and technology alone, or even with the aid of a strong international police force, can free all the people of the world from want. Certainly they are not free from want now, as was pointed out by Clinton P. Anderson, who, as Secretary of Agriculture, in his radio address June 15, 1946 said:

"The present food crisis isn't an unusual situation-it's only unusually *severe*. There's never enough food in the world to give every one what he needs to eat, at any given moment. Two-thirds of the world's people are chronically undernourished."

During the Second World War the U. S. *Office of War Information* issued a pamphlet entitled, *The United Nations Fight for the Four Freedoms*, which says:

"... beyond any doubt, men now possess the technical ability to produce in great abundance the necessities of daily life-enough for every one. This is a revolutionary and quite unprecedented condition on earth, which stimulates the imagination, and quickens the blood. . . . In the short space of a few decades we have changed scarcity to abundance and are now engaged in the experiment of trying to live with our new and as yet unmanageable riches. The problem becomes one not of production but of distribution and consumption."

Characterizing this statement as "a typical example of wishful thinking," Burch and Pendell, in their book, *Human Breeding and Survival*, further comment:

"That men now possess the technical ability to produce in great abundance the necessities of daily life is true. But that men can produce enough for 'every one' is certainly not 'beyond any doubt.' The huge death rates of two-thirds of the earth's people indicate that man is not producing enough for healthful living; and this fact suggests how much more is needed to provide for even the present population of the world. Yet population is very much on the move, and 'every one' fifty years from now will mean something quite different from what it means today. In 1900, 'every one' meant some 1,600,000,000 people. Today, notwithstanding two world wars and very high death rates in Asia and parts of Europe, it means about 2,500,000,000; and by the end of this century, at recent rates of increase, it may mean as many as 3,300,000,000 people."

It has been estimated that, with our present ability to produce, we could probably care adequately for a world population of three-quarters of a billion people. H. G. Wells once said that one half a billion was probably closer to a "right-sized" world population, under present-day conditions. Others who have carefully studied the subject are in agreement with Wells. Note the following:

"If each family in the world had a fair-sized house with its own yard; had meat to eat at least once a day and an adequate supply of fruits and milk; had proper medical care and lived in a healthful and stimulating climate; it is doubtful whether all these good things of life could be spread over more than 500,000,000 people at the present time." (*Population Bulletin*, December, 1948). In further support of this view we quote Colin Clark, the authority on international levels of living. In his book, *The Conditions of Economic Progress*, he shows that:

"The oft-repeated phrases about poverty in the midst of plenty, and the problems of production having already been solved if only we understood the problems of distribution, turn out to be the most untruthful of all modern cliches."

BRITAIN'S POPULATION PROBLEM

Some idea of the vastness of this "population" problem-and the urgency with which its solution must be found, may be seen from a study of the situation in Great Britain today. In the book by Colin Clark above referred to, figures are given showing the relative levels of living of thirty-four nations. The first seven are listed in the following order: United States, Canada, New Zealand, Great Britain, Switzerland, Argentina, Australia. Included in these it will be noted are five New World countries, where the ratio of population to land and natural resources is relatively low. Switzerland, of course, maintains its high level of living largely because of the rich tourist trade it enjoys.

Britain owes her place in this fortunate list because of her empire, on which "the sun never sets." But this list was prepared in 1940. It may be questioned if it would remain unchanged today. According to the June, 1949 Report of the Royal Commission on Population, Great Britain has more than two and one-half times as many people per square mile as Europe and more than eleven times as many as the United States.

During the nineteenth century Britain was supreme in industrialization, trade, naval force, and investments abroad. Today this is no longer true, and the trend in her vital coal production, her exports and foreign investments has been decidedly downward. This trend was inevitable, but it has been hastened, since 1913, by two world wars. As a result she is caught with a surplus population; that is to say, a population larger than she can support from the combined yields of her land, industry, and foreign trade.

This large surplus population estimated to be at least fifteen million, is almost certain to continue Britain's chronic crisis. Britain, of course, has other problems. One which is perhaps better known is her acute "dollar" shortage-coming as the aftermath to World War II. However, this surplus population is not her *acute* problem; it threatens to be her *chronic* problem.

In the *St. Louis Globe Democrat* for December 26, 1949 there appeared an article containing a solution to this problem. It was captioned:

"FIFTEEN MILLION MUST EMIGRATE IF ENGLAND IS TO SURVIVE"

This solution was the suggestion of Dr. Burch, from whom we have already several times quoted. According to Burch, the emigration of some fifteen million, or approximately one-third of Britain's present population, to more thinly inhabited British areas, such as Australia, Canada, and parts of Africa, would not only prove advantageous to the emigrants themselves, but would help to make the United Kingdom self-supporting. The suggested mass migration, of some half-million a year for thirty years, would not be an easy job, Dr. Burch admits, and it would doubtless be at the expense of the United States. It is nevertheless his contention that it would be cheaper to move a 140 pound person *once*, than to move some 1,400 pounds of food, plus other raw materials, *every year*, to support that person if he remains in Britain.

The case of Britain, which has statesmen "at their wit's end" to solve, is not mentioned here because it is the world's foremost population and living problem. Quite to the contrary. It is intended to show that if in the case of such a country these problems have become so grave as to defy solution, what must they be in the rest of the world? How much we need to continue, and never to cease, to pray: "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth."

"MAN'S EXTREMITY GOD'S OPPORTUNITY"

Just how the Almighty will bring order out of this chaos we know not. That he will do so we are sure. This earth is his footstool (Isa. 66:1; Matt. 5:35; Acts 7:49), and he has declared it to be his intention to make the place of his feet glorious. (Isa. 60:13.) With us this would be impossible-not so with him.

The food question will be solved miraculously if need be, but more than likely it will be done naturally. If a miracle is necessary our faith will not falter. Did not our Lord Jesus show us, in the feeding of the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, that to the power of the Creator, in his hands or in his Father's, it could be no greater difficulty to produce bread for a few thousand people, in an extraordinary (supernatural) way, than it is to produce, by ordinary (natural) methods, food for the supply of the teeming millions who daily feast at God's bountiful table. - Matt. 14:15-21.

But we doubt if such miracles will prove necessary. Under the new government shortly to be established-when out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, the nations shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks. That is to say, the money now spent on the armies and navies of the world will be channeled into agricultural pursuits. *That* miracle will be enough, we think. - Isa. 2:2-4.

The population question will be solved-and that in a manner clearly stated by our Lord Jesus. Our readers well recall his answer to the Sadducees. (Luke 20:34-36.) At the close of the Millennium, when perfection shall have been reached, mankind will have become sexless-in that respect they will then be like unto the angels. The marriage relationship, instituted (with the human family

only) for the special purpose of producing a race, will have accomplished its purpose. The earth will be filled-not over-crowded-with holy, happy, human beings, all doing right, not from compulsion, but from choice. Then he, our Lord Jesus Christ, having put down all rule, and authority, and power, having reigned until all enemies are under his feet, with death itself destroyed, shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all. - 1 Cor. 15:24-28.

"No place shall be in that new earth
For all that blights this universe;
No evil taint the second birth --
There shall be no more curse.
Ye broken-hearted, cease your moan;
The day of promise dawns for you;
For He who sits upon the throne
Says, 'I make all things new.'

"We mourn the dead, but they shall wake!
The lost, but they shall be restored!
O! well our human hearts might break
Without that sacred word!
Dim eyes, look up! sad hearts, rejoice!
Seeing God's bow of promise through,
At sound of that prophetic voice:
'I will make all things new.'"

-- "*Herald*" - October 1950

Afterward

"Look up, O Earth; no storm can last
Beyond the limits God hath set;
When its appointed work is past,
In joy thou shalt thy grief forget.
Where sorrow's plowshare hath swept through,
Thy fairest flowers of life shall spring,

For God shall grant thee life anew,
And all thy wastes shall laugh and sing.
Hope thou in Him; His plan for thee
Shall end in triumph and release;
Fear not, for thou shalt surely see
His afterward of peace."

"Every Eye Shall See Him"

An examination of Rev. 1:7

"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." - Rev. 1:7.

IN what way will they "see" him; by natural sight or spiritual? In past ages such a question would not arise; the belief then prevalent that our Lord was resurrected in his fleshly human body made it the logical conclusion that he would return in that same body and hence would be seen of men by natural sight. We know today that our Lord was resurrected from the dead in the glory of spiritual nature, a glory that cannot be sensed by natural eyes, and that the human body buried in Joseph's tomb became no part of his present being. It follows therefore that, unless at his return he "materializes" in human form as did the angels in Old Testament days, and as he did himself upon certain occasions between the time of his resurrection and that of his ascension, he must be invisible to human sight, and the fact of his return must be discerned by other evidences, and he be "seen" therefore by what we call "spiritual sight."

It is not sufficient, though, thus to dismiss further consideration of this Scripture, for the word here is that "every eye shall see him." Some have pointed out that the word is not "*horao*" which is said to have the meaning of "discern," but "*opsetai*," which is said to mean the seeing with the natural sight, and hence that the text should be taken Literally despite the considerations which have just been expressed. Now in fact both words, "*horao*" and "*opsetai*," and their variations, in the New Testament, have both -uses, to "see" with the physical, eyes and to "see" mentally. Since this is a rather important point, a few instances of the word which is rendered "see" in the text under consideration are given here in order to establish the matter.

John 3:36 - "He that believeth not the Son shall not *see (opsetai)* life."

Luke 3:6 - "All flesh shall *see (opsetai)* the salvation of God."

Matt. 27:24 - "I am innocent of the blood of this just man. *See (opsesthe)* you to it."

Matt. 27:4 - "What is that to us. *See (opsei)* thou to that."

In the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint):

Psa. 49:9 - "That he should still live for ever and not *see* corruption."

Zech. 9 :5 - "Ashkelon shall *see* and be afraid."

And in the Apocrypha:

Baruch 4:24, 25 - "The neighbors of Zion ... shall *see your* salvation ... Thine enemy hath persecuted thee but shortly thou shalt *see* his destruction."

From these instances -- there are others -- it should be clear that the word is not used necessarily to mean "seeing" with the physical sight; it does on occasion indicate "seeing" with the mental sight, and it does not follow, therefore, that the use of "*opsetai*" here teaches that Jesus at his return will be visible to mankind.

The next thing to consider is the thought in John's mind when he wrote the words. What did *he* intend to convey? What is the understanding that the Holy Spirit sought to impart to us through John's ready pen?

The verse stands by itself; it has no direct connection either with the preceding or the succeeding verses. It is an ecstatic outburst, as it were, on John's part using the language of the Old Testament. He had written his greeting, a greeting of grace and peace from the Father, the Son, and the angelic host as represented by the archangels, (the "seven spirits before the throne"). He had gone on to extol the One who has both saved us and made us kings and priests, and having concluded this greeting with a deep-felt "Amen" (vs. 6), it is as if a new thought strikes him and he exclaims, "Behold, he cometh . . .," seeing the ultimate end of all that he had witnessed in vision on Patmos. We should take the verse as being, not a bald, sober statement of physical fact, but a rhapsody of praise for a forthcoming event expressed in familiar Scriptural terms. The words of this verse are repeated from the sayings of Jesus and the utterances of the prophets and it is to those origins that we should turn if we would rightly understand the text.

The memory immediately in John's mind must have been the reply of Jesus to the High Priest, recorded in Matt. 26:64. John was present at that scene (John 18:15) and heard the words. "Hereafter ye shall *see (opsontai)* the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." That declaration was in turn a direct reference to Dan. 7:13. "One like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven . . . and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him." Now that verse in Daniel, in common with the whole of the chapter, is quite clearly symbolic; we do not expect that the Most High will seat himself upon an earthly throne and superintend the burning of a literal ten-horned beast! Neither do we expect that the Lord Jesus will literally be brought before a throne of fire in order to receive his Kingdom. And Jesus knew that this was symbolic when he alluded to this well-known belief before Caiaphas. John knew too when he quoted the words in Rev. 1:7, and there was no doubt in his mind as to the reality of that Coming even though he knew himself to be describing it in terms that were symbolic.

But John's thoughts had ranged further back than the time of Daniel. He had the golden visions of Isaiah in mind, visions in which the same word "*opsetai*" is used for the same event. He was thinking of Isa. 40:5-"And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall *see (opsetai)* it together," and of Isa. 52:8-"For they shall *see (opsontai)* eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion." (This latter Scripture refers to the "Watchers" coming as it were "face to face" with the returning Lord, and not, as is sometimes suggested, to the harmony of believers on doctrinal matters at the "Time of the End.")

"They shall see, eye to eye, the Lord returning to Zion" is the way Margolis translation has it, and this is the thought both of the Hebrew and the Greek of the Septuagint).

Quite instinctively John associated with these Scriptures another theme, that upon which the prophet Zechariah dwelt when he said (Zech. 12:10) -- "*they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son.*" John had already associated that Scripture with a limited fulfillment at the time of the Crucifixion (John 19:37); now he associates it with a greater fulfillment. Not only would the "Watchers" as in Isa. 52:8, see the Lord returning to Zion; not only would "all flesh," all the world, as in Isa. 40:5, see the glory of the Lord revealed; not only would the wicked who had risen up for judgment, as in Daniel 7, see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, but those who in John's sight were the furthest of all removed from God-"*they also which pierced him*" would experience this same

realization of his Return for judgment and conversion. None can escape the Coming of the Son of Man! All are to be brought before him that he might separate them as a shepherd divides between his, sheep and his goats. (Matt. 25:32.) Just as in Zechariah there is a world-wide mourning for an only sin so in John's ecstasy he foresaw that "all kindreds of the earth shall wail *over* him" (not "*because of*." The word is *epi* and the thought that of mourners wailing over a dead beloved one). The correspondence between Zech. 12:10 and Rev. 1:7 on this point is exact.

It should be clear then that since the "seeing" in the Scriptures which gave John his inspiration for this verse in Revelation is not physical, but metaphorical, John is hardly likely to have intended his words here to be interpreted to mean physical sight. "*Behold,*" he says, in the language of his beloved Scriptures, "*he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him.*" He knew that the "seeing" in those texts was with the mental sight and it is reasonable to conclude that in alluding to those texts he applied the same meaning to them.

A further confirmation of this viewpoint is the fact that if "they that pierced him" are literally to witness his coming in the clouds of heaven they must be resurrected *before* the Second Advent takes place. Such a thought is out of harmony with all that we know of the Plan. The Lord comes, first, to raise his own faithful ones. After that, and after he has presented the risen Church before the presence of the Father with exceeding joy, he will be revealed, with his Church, in glory to the world. And only after that will the funeral Resurrection commence and "they that pierced him" be awakened from the sleep of death to stand before the great White Throne. They will not, they can not, physically witness his return to earth; but they will "see" him then in exactly the same way that we, now, see, "eye to eye," the Lord returning to Zion.

- *Bible Study Monthly, Eng.*

Half Hour Meditations on Romans

No. 25

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? - Gen. 18:25

He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness -- Acts 17:31

IN OUR consideration of the first four verses of chapter three we were led to the following conclusions:

- (1) The Jews had a great advantage or surplus of privilege over that enjoyed by the Gentiles.
- (2) This advantage may be seen, in the first place, in that to them were entrusted the oracles of God. (See Rom. 9:4, 5 for a further display of Jewish privileges.)
- (3) Their failure to profit by these privileges did not make them any less real or splendid.

And (4) The oracles of God contained a promise of eternal life.

Nevertheless, even though every Jew were to perish and none of them were to secure eternal life, it could not be said that Gods promises to them had failed, for *they were not unconditional but conditioned on faith and obedience*. They were made not to him who is a Jew outwardly but to him who is a Jew inwardly -- to circumcision of the heart not to that of the flesh. (See this argument fully developed in Rom. 9:6-13.)

Is There Unrighteousness with God?

Instead of now proceeding to discuss other privileges enjoyed by the Jew, the Apostle anticipates and meets a further objection to the points established.

But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man.) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world (Rom. 3:5-6)?

When things are placed together, "it often happens that one appears to advantage by the side of another in virtue of the influence of the contrast. It is set off. It is made more striking and conspicuous. This is the meaning of the term [here translated commend]."

Gods righteousness, faithfulness, truthfulness is commended, set off, made more conspicuous by the unrighteousness of men. This is true in relation to the unrighteousness of all men, although the Apostle is concerned just now with contrasting Gods righteousness with the unrighteousness of the Jew.

Since then mans unrighteousness (the Jews in this instance) sets off Gods righteousness, is it righteous on Gods part to judge an act he turns to his own advantage? Such seems to be the objection raised. The expression "What shall we say," indicates a brief voluntary pause in thought. "In using it, the Apostle seems to have stopped for a moment, that he might reweigh the idea or expression that was rushing forward for utterance. It is fitted to lead the reader to collect himself; while it makes him feel his iniquity whetted and also brings him abreast with the Apostle in the conscious exercise of the logical faculty."

But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say?

In presenting the question "Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?" the Apostle says "I speak as a man." It is as though he said: When I ask this question, I am deeply conscious that I am using language that is intrinsically improper when applied to God. But in condescension to human weakness, I transfer to him language which it is customary for men to employ when referring to human relationships.

To the question "Is God unrighteous," etc., the Apostle replies "God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?" (A more complete discussion appears in Rom. 9:14-18.)

The reasoning in this reply has been clearly stated by another thus: "If Gods drawing a good result from a bad deed were enough to destroy his right to judge him who committed it, the final judgment would evidently become impossible; for as God is always turning to good the evil which men have devised, every sinner could plead in his defense: My sin has after all served some good end."

Or as another suggests: "No final judgment is any longer possible if the beneficial consequences of sin, . . . [Gentile] or Jewish, justify the sinner. This idea is exactly that which is expounded in the two following verses."

Sinners to be Punished Notwithstanding the Overruling of Their Sin to Gods Praise

For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say), Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just" (Rom. 3:7, 8).

"When the Apostle ascribes to the occasion of his life a superabounding of the trueness of God, he does not refer of course to any intrinsic increase of the subjective moral excellence of God. The notion of such an increase would be utterly inconsistent with the inspired mans conceptions of the infinite perfection and independence of God. The overplus referred to is entirely relative to the apprehensions of men and other intelligent creatures."

The "lie" is most naturally to be explained as representing the false profession of the Jews, by which they claimed to be the people of God, while living in rebellion to him. They said they were Jews and were not but did lie, just as many in nominal spiritual Israel have done since (Rev. 3:9). By contrast with such a "lie," such untrueness, unfaithfulness to the claims of conscience and of God, the truth of God superabounds to his glory. His holiness blazes forth into brighter conspicuousness against such a dark background.

When the Apostle says, "my" lie, he is speaking representatively. It is as though he were to say: I may well ask the question: How shall God, on the principles mentioned, judge the world? For, let me represent the case of an individual belonging to the vast class of the unbelieving and ungodly. Any such individual might come before the Judge and say to him on his own behalf: I, too, by my lie have contributed to thy glory. And he must be acquitted.

Good Ends Do Not Justify Evil Means

In verse eight the Apostle pushes his refutation to the utmost. "Why not go even further? Why, after annihilating the judgment, not to be thoroughly consequent say further: And let us even furnish God by sinning more freely with richer opportunities of doing good! Will not every sin be a material which he will transform into the pure gold of his glory?"

Why not do evil that good may come, as some slanderously report us to do and as some affirm that we teach?

It will be noted that the Apostle refers to two distinct "allegations which had obtained more or less currency regarding himself and his Christian brethren. The one was a charge against their conduct: the other was a charge in reference to their doctrine. They were (1) calumniously reported to do evil that good might come; and (2) they were represented as directly or indirectly maintaining that it was a right thing, in certain circumstances at least, to do as they were reported to do."

"It is plain that the charge of untruth was for some reason or another often thrown at St. Paul; we see this in the marked urgency with which from time to time he asserts his truthfulness; The things which I say, behold, before God, I lie not (Gal. 1:20); I speak the truth in Christ and lie not (Rom. 9:1). Perhaps the manifold sympathies of his heart gave innocent occasion sometimes for the charge. The man who could be all things to all men (1 Cor. 9:22), taking with a genuine insight their point of view, and saying things which showed that he took it, would be very likely to be set down by narrower minds as untruthful.

And the very boldness of his teaching might give further occasion, equally innocent; as he asserted at different times with equal emphasis, opposite sides of truth. But these somewhat subtle excuses for false witness against this great master of holy sincerity would not be necessary where genuine malice was at work. No man is so truthful that he cannot be charged with falsehood; and no charge is so likely to injure even where it only feigns to strike. And of course the mighty paradox of Justification lent itself easily to the distortions, as well as to the contradictions, of sinners.

Let us do evil that good may come, no doubt represented the report which prejudice and bigotry would regularly carry away and spread after every discourse and every argument about free forgiveness.

It is so still: If this is true, then the worst sinner makes the best saint. Things like this have been current sayings since Luther, since Whitefield, and till now." "We need not anticipate the reply given to such reasoning or rather to such slander, for of reasoning it deserves not the name. The Apostle answers it at large, and in the most impressive and satisfactory manner in the sixth chapter." "Here the allusion is too passing to bring this out."

"Of those who thus slandered not merely the Apostles personally but the truth they preached, the holy cause in which they were engaged, and who, by their ignorant and impious cavils and misrepresentations, encouraged both themselves and others in rejecting the only way of salvation, the damnation was just. " This does not refer to their final destiny, al though doubtless if they persisted in their conduct and failed to repent, it would result in their eventual destruction. The word damnation, however, properly signifies judgment, and in this place means that the conduct of those who thus slandered the Apostles and perverted their doctrines was richly deserving of condemnation and punishment. It should be well ob served however that "the Apostle does not

express himself thus till he has satisfied all the demands of logical discussion."

"Whose doom is just. What a witness is this to the inalienable truthfulness of the Gospel! This brief, stern utterance absolutely repudiates all apology for means by end; all seeking of even the good of men by the way of saying the thing that is not. Deep and strong, almost from the first, has been the temptation to the Christian man to think otherwise, until we find whole systems of casuistry developed whose aim seems to be to go as near the edge of untruthfulness as possible, if not beyond it, in religion. But the New Testament sweeps the entire idea of the pious fraud away with this short thunder peal, Their doom is just. It will hear of no holiness that leaves out truthfulness; no word, no deed, no habit that even with the purest purpose belies the God of reality and veracity."

Our Privileges Too Are Very Great, Let Us Not Fail to Improve Them

"Notwithstanding its temporary application to the Jewish people, this passage (Rom. 3:1-8), which will find its complete explanation in chapter 11, has a real and permanent value."

"In the first place we may observe that the gifts of God, the favors and privileges he bestows, are not the less to be viewed as advantages . . . [because] they are liable to be misimproved, and . . . [because] their misimprovement aggravates condemnation. We might think, and in one view should think justly, that it would have been better for the unbelieving Jews not to have possessed the Oracles of God; because their guilt would thus have been mitigated. And thus, too, it is with all who now possess the Word of God and the opportunity of hearing the Gospel, . . . [and] who hear and treat the message with scorn and rejection. . . . Yet surely it will never on this account be denied, that to possess the Word of God and to hear the Gospel of God's grace are eminent advantages; in the same manner as the bounties of Providence are good things, although the abuse of them enhances the guilt of their possessors."

Let God Be True

"In the second place, there are some principles that in all our reasonings we ought to assume as fixed- -necessarily and immutable true -- from the full assurance of which we should never allow our minds to be shaken by any perplexing appearances or by any want of ability on the part of finite and fallible creatures fully to explain every seeming difficulty.

Such a principle is the righteousness of God. Deprive him of this perfection and he would cease to be God. Whatever difficulties, then, we may in this respect discover in comparing the ways of his providence with the attributes of his nature, surely it is infinitely more becoming to impute them to the limited and feeble nature of our own faculties than to admit for an instant into our minds the remotest suspicion that there can be unrighteousness with God.

We should beware of even for arguments sake allowing our selves to make suppositions injurious to the Divine character." The Apostle himself, as the reader will have observed, seemed to be "in a strait" between the wish to represent correctly the objection he was anticipating and answering and the dread of speaking one really irreverent word. "I speak," he says, "as a man," "as if this question of balanced rights and wrongs were one between man and man, not between man and Eternal God. Such talk, even for arguments sake, is impossible for the regenerate soul except under urgent protest."

"Let God be esteemed true and faithful, whatever consequence may follow. This was a first principle and should be now that God should be believed to be a God of truth, whatever

consequences it might involve.

How happy would it be if all men would regard this as a fixed principle, a matter not to be questioned in their hearts or debated about, that God is true to his word! How much doubt and anxiety it would save professing Christians; and how much error it would save among sinners! Amidst all the agitations of the world, all conflicts, debates, and trials it would be a fixed position where every man might find rest, and which would do more than all other things to allay the tempests and smooth the agitated waves of human life." With the Apostle it was assumed as a first principle in all his reasoning that if a doctrine "implied that God was not faithful, it was of course a false doctrine. . . . What a noble principle is this! . . . And if all men were willing to sacrifice their opinions when they appeared to impinge on the veracity of God; if they started back with instinctive shuddering at the very supposition of such a want of fidelity in him; how soon would it put an end to the boastings of error, to the pride of philosophy, to lofty dictation in religion!"

Be Always True to Conscience

In the third place let us beware of exercising our intellect at the expense of conscience. It is plain that only from such a state of mind could the objections anticipated by St. Paul arise. The maxim of doing evil that good may come, of sinning that grace may abound, St. Paul clearly treats as contemptible when its true character has once been disclosed. "And why? Because it is professedly an explanation of the ways of God with man, which is at the same time an excuse for immorality. . . . And St. Paul shows, by the very contempt with which he treats it, that a man who will play false with his conscience and then proceed to find intellectual justifications is not to be met in the intellectual region at all. He has been condemned already.

"St. Paul then, we find, will not argue with one who reasons at the expense of his conscience; and this is an important principle. When the intellect is acting purely, it must be free and must be dealt with seriously on its own ground. But the conscience must be followed first of all. Its light is clearer than the light of intellect and must be left supreme. Whatever be the bewilderment of my intellect, I am self condemned, God condemned, if I play false to the moral light. And arguments to the contrary, however clever sounding or philosophical are in fact sophistry."

-- *P. L. Read*

God's Precepts Perfect

The law of Jehovah is perfect,
Restoring the soul;
The testimony of Jehovah is sure,
Making wise the simple;
The precepts of Jehovah are right;
Rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of Jehovah is pure,
Enlightening the eyes.
The fear of Jehovah is clean,
Enduring forever;
The ordinances of Jehovah are true,
And righteous altogether.

- Psalm 19:7-9.

Gentleness

THY gentleness hath made me great," said David, or, "With Thy meekness Thou hast multiplied me." (Psa. 18:25.) "*Thy* gentleness" -- again it is all of God. It was something entirely apart from himself which had made the king great. "Thou hast also given me the shield of salvation: and Thy right hand hath holden me up." We cannot wonder over the Psalmist's greatness, for the Almighty was his Counselor and promoting his cause.

Jehovah never failed in manifestations of love and gentleness in His dealings with His typical people - - wandering and rebellious Israel-forever disobeying and repenting; forever falling short of the ideals set before them by the Prophets whom God raised up to lead and teach them; and always living far beneath the privileges which they might have enjoyed under the gracious provisions of so great a theocracy.

Times without number God had rescued them from most desperate situations, given them glorious victories over their enemies and brought them safely into places of rest and quietness-"beside still waters." Like as a Father the Lord had pitied Israel; and because Israel feared Him and was striving in her exceedingly human way to obey Him, God was gentle, compassionate, merciful. Long whiles He bore with her backslidings, not appearing to mark every failure, but encouraging the feeble attempts which she made to please Him. Every chastisement was given because He loved His people with divine and fatherly love. He felt every stroke of the rod His hand applied, and in pity He removed their afflictions as soon as they had learned in some measure the lessons He sought to inculcate.

When we understand something of the gentleness of God toward Israel, it should not be difficult for His children of the New Creation, begotten of the Spirit, to appreciate in a measure the gentleness and compassion of the Father toward us. "He knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust." He knows every device or imagination which we frame or form in our hearts. He knows every trait of our depraved human nature as well. And does He not pity our frailty? Had He not dealt with us according to His great mercy instead of His justice, we should utterly have perished long ago. But we need not fear of receiving anything at His hands but the utmost kindness and compassion while we strive in sincerity to obey His precepts and commandments.

"Because Thy loving-kindness is better than life, therefore my lips shall praise Thee," sang the poet of Israel (Psa. 63:3); and today the children of the King need not go mourning all their days because of their shortcomings and failures. They have abundant occasion for rejoicing because of the manifold goodness of the Lord who is unwilling that any should perish. Notwithstanding the evils and imperfections which He sees in His children, and which He cannot excuse or lightly pass over, He deals with them in wisdom and gentleness, inviting them to come to the mercy seat with their sins and assuring them of abundant pardon. The same loving One who traveled in weariness up and down the Galilean hills is still calling in words of unutterable sweetness, "Come." He still feeds His flock "like a shepherd and gathers the lambs with His arm and carries them in His bosom." We know His love and gentleness will cover the infinite stretches of eternity and our needs will be forever met.

But the Christian must come face to face with these divinely inspired words: "H that saith he abideth in Him ought himself so to walk, even as He walked." "So shall ye be My disciples." (1 John 2:6; John 15:8.) The fruit of God's own gentleness must be borne in our lives until it makes *as* great, even as it refined and exalted the character of David the king. It must grow and develop in its own place and way else the divinely ordered cluster will not be complete. The arrangement must not be disturbed. The symmetry must not be destroyed or lacking, else the Husbandman will grieve because of our heedlessness.

How beautiful is this fruit! How delicate! How fragrant! Strange indeed that any who have been united to the Vine and named the name of Christ should have so neglected that heart culture which is

necessary to bring forth the fruit of gentleness! No other fruit of the Spirit should be more in evidence—the gentle touch, the quiet tone, the placid brow, the tender ministrations of loving hands and hearts.

Recall once more the tenderness of King David as he fled before his wicked son Absalom who, with an army of insurrectionists was following his father, intent upon his destruction. David had numbered the people who had passed over Jordan with him and divided them into three companies, each company under a captain. With unspeakable sadness the king said: "I 'Will surely go forth with you myself also." That broken father heart could not endure the thought of his men engaging in battle against his beloved son. He knew their hearts, and that the young man's life would certainly be cut off there in the country of dense wood. He felt that he must direct the engagement personally, doubtless his plan being to capture Absalom alive, or allow him to escape, rather than to permit his life to be taken.

But the people with David would not allow him to go. "And the king stood by the gate side" of Mahanaim "and commanded, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard." - 2 Sam. 15:1-6.

Oh, the pathos, the heartache, the humiliation, the tenderness of the father's words - "Deal gently for my sake with the young man"! How like our heavenly Father! In gentleness and mercy He has borne with His rebellious servants and His children. How often they have defied His government, ignored His precepts, wasted His munificence and wounded His love. And yet -- listen! "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

Dear, tired hearts of today, can you not be gentle with the erring ones who have fallen upon evil times? Let your heart be humbled before God in prayer for them and plead that "He deal gently with them," and draw them back to Himself for the sake of the One who died for them. Cover them with the blood and leave them in His care. Be firm, be long-suffering, be gentle, be patient. Others, perhaps, may say that you are but being tactful; but in the Book it is called "loving-kindness."

"Now I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ," wrote Paul. "Let your gentleness be known unto all men." (2 Cor. 10:1; Phil. 4:5, Diaglott.) Everywhere, everywhere, let gentleness abound.

"These are a few things I have prayed for Lord --
A few small things Thy grace alone can give:
Strength to leave unsaid the bitter word;
Power to say the kind one and forgive
All that is said or done by thoughtless men
Blinded a little while by envy, hate.
Courage to go on and try again

When hopes have failed.
The patience, Lord, to wait.
Wisdom to see clearly and to ding
To simple truths, though fame and glory dim.
The worthiness of heart to follow Him.
A gentleness of soul; a spirit meek;
The noble life. These are the things I seek."

- *Selected*

The Word of God

"The word of our God shall stand forever." - Isaiah 40:8

Though heart grows faint and spirits sink,
By every wind of feeling blown;
Though faith itself may seem to fail,
I rest upon Thy word alone.

That word of power that framed the worlds,
Unfailing, changeless, strong, and sure;
Though heaven and earth should pass away,
What Thou hast spoken must endure.

Is Thine arm shortened, Thine ear dulled?
What Thou hast sworn hast Thou forgot?
God of the everlasting years,
All else may fail; Thou failest not.

Against the foeman's fiery darts
I wield anew the Spirit's sword,
And answer every fresh assault
With ever-fresh "Thus saith the Lord."

And, when some promised blessing seems
I dare by faith to call it mine,
Too great, too wonderful for me,
With "It is written" all my plea.

'Mid shifting sands of doubt and fear
This is the one foundation-stone;
My soul hath cast her anchor here;
I rest upon Thy Word alone.

- Annie Johnson Flint

The Question Box

The Present Mission of the Church

Question:

What is the present mission of the Church?

Answer:

The Church, to which our question relates, I understand to be the one true Church described in the New Testament.

It is there spoken of as the Body of Christ (Ephes. 1:22, 23); as one Church composed of many members (Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 10:17); as the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15); as the Church for whom Christ gave himself (Ephes. 5:25-27); that same Church whom St. Paul exhorted the elders to feed (Acts 20:28); the Church which our Lord Jesus declared he himself would build upon the Rock Confession of Faith expressed by St. Peter, that Jesus was none other than the Christ, the long-looked-for Messiah, the Anointed of God. - Matt. 16:18.

THE CHURCH'S TWO-FOLD MISSION

The mission of this one true Church, throughout the Gospel Age has been two-fold, namely:

- (1) To grow in grace; and
- (2) To bear witness.

The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that the first duty of the Church is, as St. Peter puts it in 2 Peter 3:13, to grow in grace or, to quote from St. Paul, to become conformed to the image of God's Son. (Rom. 8:29.) As Paul elsewhere tells us, we become thus transformed by the renewing of our mind. (Rom. 12:2.) We, who have put off the old man with his deeds (Col. 3:9, 10), find that though our outward man perish, yet the inward is renewed day by day. (2 Cor. 4:16.) Christ in us, that is to say, the Christ-spirit or the Christ-mind in us is, as the Apostle says, the hope of glory. - Col. 1:27.

In addition to growing in grace, the Church is to be a light-bearer, bearing witness to God, and to Christ, and to the Gospel.

While it is true that throughout the New Testament the Apostles stress, above all things, the supreme importance of holiness, at all costs, in the common, every-day life, they nevertheless take it for granted that this spirit will not be allowed to degenerate into a mere amiability, which makes itself pleasant to every one, and forgets the solemn fact that the consecrated ones are servants of a Master whom the world knows not, the messengers of a King against whom it is in revolt.

The truth and beauty of a life possessed by Christ is to be the basis of the Christian's witnessing activities. But the witness is to be articulate, not merely implied; he is to hold out the *Word* of Life; he is to seize occasion to give a reason of the hope that is in him, although always remembering to do so in meekness and fear. In conduct he is to be kind and gracious, letting his light shine that men might see his good *works*. But he is not only *thus* to shine; he is also to speak.

Furthermore, growing in grace, and bearing witness, are not to be understood as two missions, but as two phases, two inseparable phases, of one mission. We are to witness by our lives and by our words.

It is doubtless true that from the time of our first meeting with and being conquered by Christ, our life is one long laboring together with God, in the work of preparing oneself for the glorious ministries of the next Age. But it would be false, not true, if this were stated as opposed to, or independent of, another aspect of truth, namely, that the work of thus preparing oneself is so interwoven with the ministry of the Word of Life to others, as to make either impossible without the other. In our discussion of them we *may*, if we wish, distinguish the two ideas, just as a medical student may distinguish the system of nerves in our bodies from the system of arteries. But he will do this only in his studies, or at a postmortem examination. We must not forget that in a living being not one system or the other, but both nervous and arterial systems are always present, and in a living Christian the principle which enables him to personally grow more and more like Christ is never found apart from that principle of life which causes him to lose himself in the ministry of others.

HAVE THE FEET-MEMBERS A SPECIAL MISSION?

It is next inquired: Have the last members of the Church in the flesh, those we have been accustomed to call the feet-members of the Body of Christ, any different mission from that of their brethren who lived in prior periods of the Gospel Age? To this I reply: Yes -- they do have.

In making this statement I have no intention to speak dogmatically. Such remarks as I may offer are my own conclusions. I desire to do so in a spirit of a learner, not that of a master; and while presenting my own conclusions, I desire to do so in a spirit of loving consideration of the views of others who may differ with me, and whose fellowship I would cultivate rather than mar.

To me, however, it does seem as though the mission of the feet-members differs, in some important respects, from that of their brethren of former days. Of course, insofar as growing in grace is concerned, there is no difference.

Moreover the witness, in many respects, is the same; it is still concerning God, and Jesus, and the Gospel of the Kingdom. But the music of that message contains a new note, a note of tremendous importance. It has to do with time. In the words of the Lord through the Prophet Ezekiel (Eze. 12:22, 23): "I will make to cease that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, 'The days are prolonged and every vision faileth.' They shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel." Instead, "Son of man, say unto them: 'The days are at hand and the effect of every vision.'"

Yes, as John, in the Revelation is instructed to write: "The time is at hand." - Rev. 20:10.

It is the privilege of the feet-members to add this new note to their song, a note which could not have been included in the message of the brethren of former *days*.

Beautiful indeed, upon the mountains, are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion: "Thy God reigneth!" (Isa. 52:7.) "Lift up your heads; for *your* deliverance draweth nigh." - Luke 21:28.

This difference in mission has been likened by some, not improperly, I think, to the difference between sowing and reaping. However, at this point may I sound a note of warning: What I have

to say now, has to do especially with the attitude which should be ours toward other brethren whose studies may not have led them to exactly the same conclusions as ours have led us, on these and related matters. For example:- While-no- owe-today will-question that we have come to the end of the Age, differing views are held by loyal, consecrated brethren, as to just exactly where we are on the stream of time; just how far into this "end of the Age" period we have come. Some believe the harvest which our Lord himself said would be at the end of the Age (Matt. 13:29) is already in the past; others think that it is still in progress; still others believe that it has not yet commenced. As of today, my own studies have led me to the conclusion that the harvest is measurably in the past, although not yet ended.

HAS THE LORD RETURNED?

Associated with these differing views as to the harvest are questions as to the Second Presence of our Lord, who the Scriptures tell us is to be the Chief Reaper in the Gospel Age Harvest (Matt. 13:30, 41) as he unquestionably was in the harvest of the Jewish Age. (Matt. 3:12.) Consistently with the thought that the harvest is nearly ended, my own view has been that our Lord's Second Presence is an accomplished fact; that for some years he has been invisibly present. But it is not for me to deny those of the, opposite viewpoint the liberty of thought and expression which I ask for myself; nor am I to love them any less than brethren who may share my viewpoint. On the contrary, I regard them very highly, though differing in the conclusions they have reached. Brethren of both schools of thought, without question, gladly confess the same Lord, and it certainly becomes us all, while rejoicing in the light we have, to wait for greater light, assured that, in what one school would speak of as the foregleams of his approaching advent, but which I, myself, think would be better referred to as the shining of his presence, contradictory views will more and more vanish, till, in our final gathering unto him, the watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. - Isa. 52:8.

THE CLOSING OF THE DOOR

The fact that the general mission of the whole Church throughout the Gospel Age is supplemented, in the case of the feet-members, by this special message as to the time feature; that we are living in the end of the Age, that the Kingdom is nigh, even at the door (Matt. 24:33), has brought much hearts searching; and questions have been raised as to the possibility of ascertaining the date of the closing of the door of opportunity to enter the Narrow way. On pages C207, C208 of *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. III, Brother Russell suggested "three ways in which the closing of this door might be indicated: first, by a definite Bible statement of the exact date; second, by such a reversal of public sentiment with reference to the truth, that fidelity and zeal in its service would no longer meet with opposition, and when suffering with Christ for the truth's sake (Rom. 8:17) would be no longer possible; or third, by such a condition of affairs obtaining in the world that all opportunity for such service would be effectually obstructed, thus leaving no opportunities for candidates to enter into the work and to develop and prove their love and faithfulness by their activity and endurance."

Concerning these three ways he goes on to offer this illuminating comment: "Though we are definitely informed that the door will be shut sometime within this harvest period or end of the Age, the Bible does not give the exact date; and, although after the great time of trouble there will be a grand reversal of public sentiment in favor of truth and justice, we have no intimation whatever that such a condition of affairs will obtain until after the harvest period is fully ended. But we have a clear intimation that *the door will be shut* in the manner last named; for, before the Millennial day breaks, we are forewarned of a dark night wherein no man can labor-'The morning cometh, and also the night.' " - Isa. 21:12.

"COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE"

Two questions recently received which I will briefly consider, are typical of the thinking of many of the friends:

(1) Is it possible that any of the "little flock" could today make their calling and election sure, while continuing their membership in the various church systems, such as Catholic, Baptist, Lutheran, etc.?

My reply has been that this is a question which it is not for me to answer. Even at this late date there are doubtless still some consecrated children of God within these systems. In all the church associations of Christendom today there are doubtless some dear people whose hearts are very much in advance of their heads, and who, up to the light they possess, are seeking to do the will of God. This question, then, is a matter for the individual's own conscience. As the Apostle exhorts: "Let every man be persuaded in his own mind." (Rom. 14:5.) It would be a violation of my conscience for me to hold membership in any of the church systems, but I would not presume to judge others. To his own Master each must stand or fall. In due time the Lord will render a decision in every case and his judgment will be unerring. He would have us, I think, very lenient in our attitude towards any with whom welcome in touch, who, though continuing membership in a church system, manifest a Christian spirit, and who are disposed to fellowship with us to any extent. As systems, all denominations have been cast off, I think; the individuals within the systems, however, are considered apart from the denomination concerned, and only the Lord can read the heart. A great deal will depend, in each case, upon the degree of light possessed. We ourselves, have been highly favored; it is for us to be on guard, lest the spirit of sectarianism creep upon us unawares. My counsel to all continues to be that they stand free, not only from church systems, but from all parties, sects, and creeds of men—from all "confessions of faith." As for others, if in the Lord's providence it seems best to him to permit some to complete their calling and election without leaving Babylon, or without entirely abandoning all creeds of men, or confessions of faith, that would be my will—for *them*. Generally, however, I would expect, at this late hour in the Gospel Age, that not many who, failing to perceive Babylon's true condition, or for other reasons, remain in her, will be amongst those who one day will hear the Master's "Well done."

HAS THE DOOR CLOSED YET?

(2) The other question reads: Did the door of opportunity to be of the 144,000 close in 1914? If not, has it closed since that date or is it still open?

Answer: It is my conviction that the door in question is still open, and that it will not close until the last member has passed beyond the veil. Just when that date will be, I do not know.

If the door closed in 1914 or at any other time in the past, one of two other things must also be true, namely:

1. At the time the door closed, the last member had successfully completed his earthly career and gone beyond the veil, or
2. A certain number, still in the flesh and having yet to complete their earthly trial, had nevertheless developed such maturity of Christian character that failure under any further testing would, for them, be impossible.

Let us consider, very briefly, these two implications. In the first place, the proposition that we have the means for determining the date for the glorification of the Church, was set forth by Brother Russell in *Studies in the Scriptures, Vol. II*, pages B76,B77. I quote:

"In this chapter we present the Bible evidence proving that the full end of the Times of the Gentiles, i.e., the full end of their lease of dominion, will be reached in A.D. 1914:... And be it observed, that if this is shown to be a fact firmly established by the Scriptures, it will prove: . . . that some time before the end of A.D. 1914 the last member of the divinely recognized Church of Christ, the 'royal priesthood,' the 'Body of Christ,' will be glorified with the Head."

In considering this proposition it is of the highest importance that we remember that the conviction that the consummation of the Age has been reached, rests upon several different, independent "signs," whereas the inference that 1914 would see the glorification of the Church was deduced solely from the parallels drawn between the Jewish and Gospel Ages. That these two Ages do correspond in many respects, there can be no question; but that some of the parallels drawn between them, especially their time features, strained and forced, seems equally clear, and in respect to their harvests, as may be seen by reference to *Reprints, Vol. 7*, page R5950, before he left us Brother Russell recognized this mistake. Under the caption "Our mistake respecting the harvest," he wrote: Our thought was purely an inference, and now [September 1916] we see that it was an unjustified one."

It is my thought that had our dear Pastor continued with us, he would have given the subject the thorough re-examination it deserves and that, in the light of the events which have since transpired, his keen spiritual mind would have seen the necessity of discarding still more of the "parallels" than those features to which, in the article cited, he referred. However, his brief remarks are quite sufficient for our purpose. They not only admit mistake, but what is of still greater value, they explain the nature of the mistake. It was not merely that we had been mistaken in the year in which the Church was to be glorified. Had that been the extent of our mistake, he would, presumably, have been able, by a more accurate calculation, to tell us how *many* years we were in error, and just what the correct date would be. No! our mistake was of a different character -- not merely an error in arithmetic. It lay in supposing that the date of the Church's *glorification* could be ascertained at all, by the "parallels" method. His actual words are: "We should not have looked for parallelisms between the starting of the Gospel Church and its experiences, and the starting in this harvest time of the heavenly Church and its experiences. These are no part to the parallel."

Again, he said: "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."

Yet again, he wrote: "The harvesting of the Jewish Age, gathering 'Israelites indeed' into the Gospel Church, did not close with A.D. 70, but progressed in various parts of the world thereafter. Quite a good many Jews, doubtless, profiting by their terrible experience, were all the better prepared to be gathered into the Gospel Garner after the destruction of their national polity. Similarly, we may expect that quite a good many [Christians] will yet be gathered to the heavenly Garner, and we know of no time-limit here."

I know of no time-limit here, either. With Brother Russell I am quite satisfied that it was a mistake to try to arrive at such a "time-limit" from the parallels, and no other satisfactory method has occurred to me, or been brought to my attention. That the day will eventually arrive when the last member of the Church will have been faithful unto death, I am, of course, assured. And I have confidence, too, in his promise, that to those who are thus faithful, he will give a crown of life. In this confidence, and in the assurance that he is making all things work together for good to us who love him, and that he will under no circumstances permit us to be tempted above that we are able to bear, I rest. - Rev. 2:10; Rom. 8:28; 1 Cor. 10:13.

Foregoing I have endeavored to show:

1. That insofar as the glorification of the Church is concerned, not only is the date, 1914, erroneous, but that the true date is not to be ascertained from the parallels of the Jewish and Gospel Ages.
2. That up to the present time no other method satisfactory to me of determining the date of this event has occurred to me, or to any Christians of my acquaintance.
3. That the absence of a revelation on this matter does not give me any occasion for unrest, but leaves me content, rejoicing in the continued privilege of ministering the glorious Gospel (a message angels fain would sing) to all who have ears to hear, and while seeking to assist others, to endeavor, by his grace, to make my own calling and election sure.

I come now to the second implication in this question, namely, that the door of opportunity could have closed before the last member of the Church had completed his trial, on the supposition that some had developed such maturity of Christian character that, after a certain date, failure under any further testing would, for them, be impossible?

To this I reply: I do not deny that, in his inscrutable wisdom, the Almighty may be able, years before the end of the race-course is reached, to foresee the final outcome in the case of one or other of the prospective members of the Church. I do not know that he can (I speak as a man-Rom. 3:5), nor, in speaking- of one who calleth things which be not as though they were, would I be so foolish as to say that he cannot. With God all things are possible (save the denial of himself and his attributes). However, nowhere in the Scriptures, so far as I can recall, is the thought advanced that any, in this life would attain a state in which failure would thereafter be impossible. On the contrary the Scriptures are most explicit in their warnings. "Be thou faithful unto death," is the Master's own exhortation, "and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10.) "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (Rev. 3:11.) The implication is clear that if we do not hold fast, another will take our crown. If we are faithful for the greater part of the journey, and then become unfaithful, a crown of life will not be given us. But if the crown now held in reservation for us is not to become ours because of unfaithfulness, it must be awarded to another. But before such other could receive it, he, in turn, must be faithful-unto death. In order to thus be proved, he must enter the door of opportunity to run for the great prize. Therefore that door must be ajar. Thus must it remain, so long as a single member remains in the flesh.

When at last the door is shut, a company who, we have reason to believe, correspond to the "foolish virgins" of our Lord's parable (Matt. 25:1, 2), will be fully informed on the subject. *They* will announce the fact to all who then have ears to hear. They will do so in these words: "Let us give glory unto him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." - Rev. 19:7.

That time has not yet come, but soon it will be here. Meantime, as the poet has said in the hymn we some times sing:

"We see the marriage splendor,
Within the open door;
We know that those who enter
Are blest for evermore;
We see our King, more lovely
Than all the sons of men;
We haste because that door, once shut,
Will never ope again."

- P. L. Read.

"Lord, Teach Us to Pray"

"And it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, that when He ceased, one of His disciples said to Him, Lord, teach us to pray." - Luke 11:1.

THIS request, "Lord, teach us to pray," from one of Jesus' disciples, was made after hearing Jesus pray. He had never heard any one pray like Jesus. None could pray like He did. How many of the Lord's disciples all through the Age, have felt the need for this same request! How many of us even today continue to pray, "Lord, teach us to pray"!

As we review the prayer given in response to this request, are we not impressed with its simplicity, its sincerity; its depth, and withal its self forgetfulness in his great desire for his Father's glory. All yes, there is great need for us to pray, even today, "Lord, teach us to pray." Regardless of what the cost may be, grant us that spirit that will enable us to pray as thou hast prayed.

The disciples saw in Jesus a connection between his life of holiness as he walked among men, and his secret life of prayer. Just so should it be with the lives of his followers. As another has said, "Our daily life in the world is made the test of our intercourse with God in prayer. How often the Christian, when he comes to pray, does his utmost to cultivate certain frames of mind which he thinks will be pleasing. He does not understand, or forgets, that life does not consist of so many loose pieces, of which now the one, then the other, can be taken up. Life is a whole, and the pious frame of the hour of prayer is judged of by God from the ordinary frame of the daily life of which the hour of prayer is but a small part. Not the feeling I call up, but the tone of my life during the day, is God's criterion of what I really am and desire. My drawing nigh to God is of one piece with my intercourse with men and earth: failure here will cause failure there. And that not only when there is the distinct consciousness of anything wrong between my neighbor and myself; but the ordinary current of my thinking and judging, the unloving thoughts and words I allow to pass unnoticed, can hinder my prayer. The effectual prayer of faith comes out from a life given up to the will and the love of God. Not according to what I try to be when praying, but what I am when not praying, is my prayer dealt with by God."

Before telling the disciples the manner their prayer should be, he said: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, will reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."

"As long as in our worship of God we are chiefly occupied with our own thoughts and exercises, we shall not meet him who is a spirit. But to the man who withdraws himself from all that is of the world and man, and prepares to wait upon God alone, the Father will reveal himself. As he forsakes and gives up and shuts out the world, and the life of the world, and surrenders himself to be led of Christ into the secret of God's presence, the light of the Father's love will be manifest. The secrecy of the inner chamber and the closed door, the entire separation from all around us, is a help to that inner spiritual sanctuary, the secret of God's tabernacle within the veil, where our spirit truly comes into contact with the Invisible One." Jesus assures us that secret prayer cannot be fruitless; its blessing will show itself in our life. Is this not wonderful that we can go alone with God, and *say*, My Father! committing to him our every interest, our all! As our dear Brother Russell has exhorted:

The holy spirit is the blessing most to be sought. This spirit of God may be possessed in a greater or a lesser measure. We are given a measure of the spirit when we are accepted as the disciples of Christ; and that flame of love there started is to become a consuming power in our lives. It is to burn out everything contrary to God, that our life may be a burning and shining light.

From the time we become the Lord's children, we should strive more and more to attain the character-likeness to Christ, and we should continue in prayer and not faint. We should seek for more and more of the spirit of the Lord, and should see that we fulfill the conditions by which we may obtain the filling of the spirit. In this sense of the word we should pray without ceasing, continuing to present the petition until we receive what we desire. But we shall not obtain the fulness of our desire until we are changed into the higher life, into the perfection of the new nature, in the resurrection. Then we shall be fully satisfied.

In the prayer taught us by our Lord, we first give honor to God, recognizing Him as our Father, acknowledging his greatness, and expressing the desire that his name be hallowed. We remember the Kingdom that is promised; and we tell him of our desire of heart for that Kingdom to come. We pray that his will may be fully done on earth. This implies that we have given up our own will, that we wish to have God's will wholly done in our mortal bodies.

Undoubtedly if we had the right conception of prayer-the Bible conception -- our prayers in public would be very brief. The Scriptures are the only criterion, the only guide. They give us no account of any instance where the Lord's saints. offered lengthy.. prayers in public. . . .

Whether we are on our knees or in the busy walks of life, our hearts should go out continually to the Lord for his guidance in all our affairs and experiences, that we may serve him in a manner that will be pleasing and acceptable to him, that we may be shielded from temptations that without his aid would be beyond our endurance, and that he will in his own due time deliver us from all evil and imperfection and grant us a place in his Heavenly Kingdom. Dear brethren, let us constantly put into practise the injunction of our Master, "Watch and pray, lest ye *enter into* temptation." - Mark 14:38.

-*Reprints*, pp. R5833-R5836.

"What Seek Ye?"

"What seek ye? Earth's glory, or favor, or pleasure,
The things which attract by their glitter and show,
The worldling's power, his ease or his treasure,
Which the god of this world can most fully bestow?
The many are seeking the things which will perish,
And few care for those which will not pass *away*.
My brother, let me earnestly ask you the question
What is *your* ambition, what seek *ye* today?"

"What seek ye? The Savior is beckoning onward,
He offers a kingdom, a crown, and a throne,
But the way to attain them lies often through sorrow,
While the cross and the path to be trod are His own.
Are you willing to follow wherever He leadeth?
Do you seek but the things which His favor can *give*?
If so, you will find at the end of the journey
That by dying to self, you most truly do *live*."

Recently Deceased

Bro. F. B. Arnold, Jamaica, N. Y. - (Aug.)
Bro. A. M. Duppel, Absecon, N. J. - (Sept.)
Bro. Isaac F. Hoskins, Ventura, Cal. - (Sept.)
Bro. M. L. McCall, Jacksonville, Fla. - (Sept.)
Bro. J. F. McClellan, Jacksonville, Fla. - (Sept.)
Sr. V. Mellvaine, Jacksonville, Fla. - (Aug.)
Bro. Wm. J. Parker, Halifax, N. S. - (Aug.)
Bro. C. C. Peoples, Rockmart, Ga. - (Aug.)