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## Giving Thanks Always

*'Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled- with the spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.' - Eph. 5:18-20.*

THERE should be a very close relationship between heart and lips when offering praise and thanks unto God; for true thanksgiving must spring from the inner grace of heartfelt appreciation. The words of Paul in Romans 10:10 find application here, in that they set forth a principle which is true in all our relationships to God: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

As we grow in appreciation of the character and attributes of God, we will feel constrained to give expression to his goodness, not only in words, but in acts and mode of life. This attitude on our part is pleasing unto the Father and is necessary to our own spiritual well being.

There can be no true praise and thanks apart from heart appreciation; and so, if this inner grace is lacking, all outward expression becomes mere idle service and mockery, and as such, is an abomination. God hates hypocrisy, and his Word expresses condemnation of those who draw near with their lips only. To some such Jesus said, "Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, *saying*, This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." (Matt. 15:7-9.) Both the houses of Israel are declared to be guilty of this abomination, and lest we partake of "the leaven of the Pharisees," we should continually join with David in the prayer that we may so live that "The words of our mouths, and the meditation of our hearts may be acceptable unto the Lord." - Psa. 19:14.

When we come to Jesus as our Savior and are accepted of him as probationary members of his Body, a great change takes place in us, but this change does not at once do away with our natural

tendencies; consequently, these are carried over into the new life, where we undergo the refining process, the transformation into the image of our Lord and Master.

Some of us in our natural tendencies are too much under the control of sentiment and impulse; others too coldly intellectual and phlegmatic; and so the Word furnishes us with mental and spiritual tonics and exercises to build up that which is lacking, for the well developed Christian must have both. And who is that Christian that does not, especially when he makes an honest comparison between himself and the perfect pattern of our Lord, find himself lacking? Most of us find that we are deficient both in understanding and feeling as respects worship of the heavenly Father.

## **WINE-DRUNK VERSUS SPIRIT-FILLED**

Seemingly there was need for admonition respecting the unrestrained use of wine among the early Christians, for we find warnings concerning it in a number of places. (Luke 21:34; Rom. 13:13; 14:21; Gal. 5:21; 1 Tim. 3:8; Titus 2:3.) Palestine was a grape producing region, and wine was in general use. John the Baptist was peculiar in that he did not drink wine; but Jesus evidently did partake thereof on occasion, for the hypocritical Pharisees, who accused John of having a demon because of his abstemiousness, reversed their criticism of Jesus and called him a "wine-bibber and a friend of publicans and sinners." - Luke 1:15; Matt. 11:18, 19.

John (John 2:1-11) tells us that the first sign wrought by Jesus was in Cana of Galilee when he turned water into wine at a wedding feast; and so common was its use even among Christians that the Apostle felt it necessary to advise that only those brethren who were moderate in their drinking be considered for the position of eldership. (1 Tim. 3:8.) Some in the Corinthian Church even went to the extreme of getting drunk at the Memorial observance. (1 Cor. 11:21.) Therefore, in our text, the Apostle again warns against the tendency to intemperance, but urges the unrestrained filling with the spirit. In this respect it is impossible to go to excess.

In much of his writings Paul stresses the importance of a correct understanding of truth, but here in our text he is emphasizing the need for emotional release by the expression of the heart's gratitude in psalms, hymns, and songs of thanksgiving. A person who is drunk with wine, is often sentimentally foolish and not rational in giving vent to the emotions; but one "filled with the spirit" is keenly aware of what he does, and so benefits in the stirring of his emotions through the beauties of verse and melody, which, in turn help to deepen the sense of appreciation.

## **PRAISE IN PSALMS AND HYMNS**

We all know by experience how this emotional release, through the expressing of gratitude and praise in songs and testimonies of thanksgiving, brings an uplift that causes us to forget the difficulties and trials that attend our way. How much good we derive therefrom, we have no way of determining, but: we know that it must be great else the Lord would not have provided so many psalms and hymns of praise, and admonished us as to their frequent use.

When King Saul was low in spirit and could not rest, he would call for David and his harp, and the music eased his troubled mind and enabled him to rest. When the Apostles were chained in prison and were in pain and misery from being beaten, they sang songs and forgot their troubles. Many hospitals and curative institutions, especially those for the insane, now use music as a therapeutic in the healing of mind and body and have found that its soothing strains are often efficacious when nothing else seems to help.

A man that is completely under the influence of alcohol, has all his senses affected, and his thoughts, speech, and actions show his condition. The same is true of one who is filled with the spirit; he too, is under a powerful influence. But instead of its being an influence that first excites and then numbs, as is the case with wine, it is a quickening, uplifting, and upbuilding experience. One who becomes drunk with wine usually enjoys the first effects of the stimulation, but the afterward is a headache and nausea, a weakening and breaking down of the physical and mental powers. But "The blessing of the Lord [being filled with his spirit -- the greatest blessing we can receive in this life], it maketh rich; and he addeth no sorrow therewith." - Prov. 10:22.

We have observed that drunkards have a tendency to talk to themselves and to sing maudlin songs. Paul suggests that, being filled with the spirit, we speak to one another in psalms and

hymns and spiritual songs, and that we not only make melody with our lips, but in our hearts. Some singers are so able in their art that they can convey sentiments with their lips that give impression to the listener of deep feeling when in reality there is no real sentiment there. God, however, is not deceived by mere lip service, no matter how real it may seem to us, for he looketh upon the heart and judges not by the seeing of the eye nor hearing of the ear.

When the Church was established on the day of Pentecost, and God's holy spirit came upon the waiting disciples, the record is that "They were *all filled* with the holy spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the spirit gave them utterance." This was evidently a loud sound and quite a demonstration, for we read that "When this sound was heard, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man ["devout Jews from every nation under heaven"] heard them speaking in his own tongue, and they were amazed and marveled, saying, Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans? . . . But others mocking said, They are filled with new wine." - Acts 2:5-13.

These who were filled with the spirit rather than with new wine, as Peter points out, were not speaking to one another so much as they were unto the multitude, for the context shows that it was in witness of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, and of the power of God through Jesus Christ to give salvation by faith rather than through works of the Law that they spoke. This witness of the spirit through the disciples was very effective in convincing these devout Jews that the Christ *of* whom they were in expectation had indeed come, for about three thousand were added to the Church that day. The gifts of the spirit granted to the early Church, did much toward its establishment, but were not intended' to aid much toward its growth in character-likeness unto the Lord, for as gifts, they were bestowed apart from any effort toward Christlikeness.

The fruit of the spirit is a matter of development, and this filling of which our text speaks has to do with fruitage. Hence it is a different and much more valuable filling than that which was bestowed in a miraculous way at Pentecost. We are not told just what the message was that the holy spirit uttered through the disciples, but reasoning from Peter's line of thought which follows, we would think it had to do with testimony concerning Jesus and his mission. The disciples, however, could have had but little, if any, volition in what was uttered.

We, on the other hand, exercise volition in the message we speak to ourselves; and so did they after they had experienced the development of fruit by the holy spirit. And while we also speak of Jesus, yet it is more in praise of his grace and beauty of character, and in heart appreciation of the love and fellowship of both the Son and the Father. The hymns we sing, especially those we choose as we become ripened in character, are largely designed to express to ourselves and to one another audibly and in rhythmic cadence, the sentiments of our hearts in thankful praise. Just note, if you will, how much this is true of such hymns as "Abide, Sweet Spirit"; "My Goal is Christ"; "His Loving-Kindness"; "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing"; "I've Found a Friend"; "Sun of My Soul"; "The Gate Ajar"; "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

The following hymn is well suited to the Apostle's admonition:

"When all Thy mercies, O my God,  
My rising soul surveys,  
Transported with the view,  
I'm lost In wonder, love and praise.

"O, how can words with equal warmth  
The gratitude declare  
That glows within my inmost heart?  
But Thou canst read it there.  
"Through all eternity, to Thee  
A grateful song I'll raise.  
And my eternal joy shall be,  
To herald wide Thy praise."

And what could be more inspiring than the Twenty-third Psalm? These and many more of equal worth give expression to our joy and gratitude, and voice for us in words better than we could choose, the praise and thanks we would offer unto God.

### THANKS FOR ALL THINGS

In the last verse of our text, the Apostle admonishes us to "Give thanks always for all things unto God, even the Father [R.V.], in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." To be able to do this indicates a well developed Christian-one who has really come to know that "All things work together for good to them that love God." Only those who actually believe that God's providences are over all their ways -- that he directs their path, and withholds no good thing from them that walk uprightly, can thus give thanks.

But what does the Apostle mean by "all things"? Naturally, there would be no question about the things we consider to be good-our daily bread, our comforts of home, the bed upon which we ease our tired bodies at night, pleasant surroundings and associations, time for study, opportunity for fellowship, and a thousand other things we could name-we would readily agree that we should give thanks for these. But how about the multitude of things that are hard, unpleasant, monotonous, disagreeable, disquieting, trying, painful, dishonoring, unjust, inhuman and even detestable: *must* we give thanks for these?

No, God will not compel us to give thanks, not even for those things for which we ask; nor will he force us to make our calling and election sure. But, if the question be asked, Should we give thanks for these things? then the answer is, Yes. Have we not made a covenant under which these bodies, reckoned holy through Christ, are committed to sacrifice, even unto death? Have we not placed ourselves under the control of the Father's will in order that his wisdom and power may be exercised on our behalf to perfect us as new creatures? And has he not told *us* that through much tribulation lies the way into the Kingdom, and that he scourgeth every son he receiveth?

How could we be conformed to the image *of* Christ and become like *God if* we did not have the means *of* developing long-suffering, kindness, compassion, generosity, mercy, patience, and sympathy? And how could the means be provided except through contacts that are hard, unpleasant, monotonous, disagreeable, etc.? Even Christ Jesus himself was made perfect through the things which he suffered, "For it became [was fitting] him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings." (Heb. 2:10.) Therefore, no matter what experiences come to us in any of our associations, whether it be family, business, social contacts or Church, we should give thanks; for all things are for our sakes and are permitted of God in order to work in us that which is pleasing in his sight. We cannot give thanks and at the same time murmur or complain; we cannot give thanks and at the same time feel impatient and resentful.

Jesus knew full well the hardness and suffering we would have to endure, but did he commiserate us because of it? No, he says, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be *exceeding* glad: for great is your reward in heaven." Again he says, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use *you*, and persecute you." But why, Lord? why give us this hard task? "That," says Jesus, "ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."

And so the multitude of things which are to try us, call for our thanks just as sincerely as do the things we enjoy, for "all things work together for good to them that love God." If the "all things" work for our good, then we should give thanks for the "all things."

But how about the weaknesses and tendencies of our own fleshly minds and bodies-do not these often cause us to stumble? And how about Satan and the principalities and powers arrayed against us to entrap us and bring to naught God's purpose concerning us? Are we to give thanks for these? Yes, we can even be thankful for these; not because they have become what they are, but because, under God's overruling providence, they become invaluable in our development. If the deed of Joseph's brethren, which they meant for evil, could become (under the providence of God) an experience for good (Gen. 45:5-8), and if all of Satan's power and cunning exercised, directly and indirectly, against Jesus could become the cup poured out by his Father, is it too much to believe that God can work the same wonders for us? "Moab is my washpot." - Psa. 108:9.

The text concludes with a statement most important to us, a statement which, if it always continues the expression of our hearts, will make all our efforts and prayers and thanksgiving acceptable unto God; but if rejected, nothing we can do will be acceptable. May God help us always to recognize and remember that only "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" and in the merit of his blood is there *any* possibility of salvation or reward for our endeavors to serve and praise him.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

- J. T. Read.

## True Christian Character

*"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power." - Eph. 1:19.*

THE Scriptures in a general way represent the Christian religion under three different classifications. First, as *a principle* it is called *Faith*; and this faith is extolled as the essential thing for salvation. "By grace are ye saved through faith"; we "walk by faith"; and "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." - Eph. 2:8; 2 Cor. 5:7; 1 John 5:4.

Second, as *a sentiment*, or emotional reaction to the revelation we are given of God, it is styled *Love*. Jesus taught that love to God and man was to be one of the very distinctive features of Christian deportment. God must be loved with all the heart, mind, soul, and strength, and the neighbor must be loved as oneself. The Apostles in their various epistles likewise represent such love to be the very essence of the Gospel of Christ, and the outstanding evidence of Christian character. "The end of the commandment," says Paul, "is love out of a pure heart," and to this Apostle, the greatest thing in the world is love. "And now abideth faith, hope, love, but the greatest of these is love," aside from which all other virtues are worthless. John likewise puts the emphasis on this quality of character, the possession or absence of which will determine the standing of the individual. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." - 1 John 4:16, 12; 1 Cor. 13:13.

Third, as *a law* or rule of life the Bible defines true Christian character as sincere *obedience to the will of God*. Christ is the "Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Again we read, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." "Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." - John 14:21.

But in the general teaching of the Word of God all three of these aspects are united and beautifully blended. Thus the Apostles Paul and Peter could say that "the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance"; therefore "denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts" we should "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world," occupied with "whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report" and adding to our faith "fortitude, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, love." All of these characteristics are embraced in the fundamental principle, the devotional response, and the law of the spirit under which new creatures in Christ attain his image and likeness.

### LOOKING UNTO JESUS

In a very concise way we believe the foregoing sets forth the facts of Christian experience and character. And we understand that the complete supremacy of our entire being, all its interests, and all its possibilities of responding to God's power are involved in this. It is not the external conduct alone that concerns the spiritual man, but the principles from which he acts, the motives that govern him, and the fervency of the love of God which he must find unmistakably shed abroad in his heart. When these aforementioned things become facts in the character, the Christian will find himself possessed of a spiritual power pervading his being -the evidence that he who raised Christ from the dead is now raising him up also into newness of life. Living thus

with Christ within, he will be able to bear with equanimity the changes, trials, and perplexities of earth, and with confidence be able to say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me," "according to the might of his power which he wrought in Christ."

The important question is, How may we receive these blessings into our lives? How may we attain these qualities, and show forth the loveliness of the Christlike character-shining as lights in the world? Let us go to the perfect pattern -"looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith." In him we see all the virtues exhibited which we desire to practise, all the love and obedience which gratitude constrains us to have wrought out in our own lives. In him we find such a richness of character, that our receptive- hearts are-made to yearn for likeness to him. "In the dignity, and the sweetness which characterize him, how strongly do we feel that there is much more than a display of external qualities, conformity to a prescribed rule, and graceful propriety of outward demeanor. Nothing is more striking than the evident connection of everything which he said and did with something internal. The sentiment and disposition which reign within, are constantly visible through his exterior deportment; and we regard his words and deeds less as distinct outward things, than as expressions or representations of character. In contemplating the life of Jesus, we find ourselves perpetually looking beyond his mere actions, and fixing our thoughts on the qualities which they indicate. His life is but the expressive countenance of his soul. We feel, that, though in the midst of present things, he is led by principles, wrapt in thoughts, pervaded by sentiments, which are above earth, unearthly; that he is walking in communion with another sphere; and that the objects around him are matters of interest to him, no further than as they afford materials for the exercise of his benevolence, and opportunities for doing his Father's will."

This, then, is the example set before us as we look unto Jesus. This is the model of true Christian character we are to seek to pattern ourselves by. And when we can be imbued with this same spirit of "God first in all our thoughts," when we become possessed of the same potent inward sentiments of heart devotion to God, so that all our words, actions, and life shall be of the same spontaneous expression of this "mind of Christ," then we will have attained a manifest degree of his character. We will be showing forth that fruitage of the spirit which will bear testimony that we are habitually "looking unto Jesus," and that his purity, his devotion, his peace, his delight in the Father's will have been imparted to us and display themselves in the manner and conduct of life.

### **MORE LIKENESS TO THEE O CHRIST**

To attain and perfect this character, we have learned from the Word, is to be the real objective and business of life. Though the Christian life must be recognized as embracing many features, it must never be- forgotten that in the last analysis there is but one real purpose before the individual, namely his own personal crystallization of character, in likeness to that of Jesus Christ. In the wisdom of God a number of things are made contributory to this end -- the preaching of the Gospel to others as time and opportunity may permit, and the laying down of one's life for the brethren in whatever manner the Lord's providences may indicate. But with Paul, we too may well be exercised in mind to be fully assured that after having preached to others, we ourselves shall not be castaways. The great fact must never be lost sight of, that what God will look for in us when all of life is over, and its opportunities for attainment have all passed away, will simply be, the image of his own dear Son.

In all that we are privileged to learn, then, as the light of truth shines on our pathway, in all that we think, and feel, and do, there must be a constant reference to this great end. Whatever will serve to forward this Divine purpose, we must learn to cherish and meditate upon. Whatever



would in any way hinder this, or in any manner operate injuriously upon a character transformation that God has purposely determined shall be built up or destroyed by so small a thing as good or evil thought, we must learn to discountenance and positively shun. All that would give a wrong bias to passions and appetites, or make provision for our predisposition to questionable inclinations toward indulging these, must be judged as contrary to the mind that was in Christ Jesus. "Whatsoever ye do," the Scriptures teach, "do all to the glory of God." Our attitude toward others, our opinion of ourselves, our use of time and means, eating and drinking, everything, is to be judged before the example furnished us by the life of Jesus.

Surely, then, nothing is of so great importance as true Christian character, and to attain it, is the greatest of all objectives. Whatever else may be done, nothing has really been done, if so be that Christ has not been formed in us, if it cannot be said of us because of our likeness to him that we are "unto God a sweet savor of Christ" (2 Cor. 2:15), because in heart and life we are constantly reflecting the same love and devotion exemplified in Jesus.

### **ESTABLISHED, STRENGTHENED, SETTLED**

"By looking to Jesus, like him thou shalt be," is the promise we delight to sing when "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" seem to best express our deepest longings. And it is by looking to Jesus as the embodiment of all that pleases the Father, that we are filled with the desire to experience all the possible reproduction of his life in ours, that God has promised. But how little of this reproduction or manifestation of Christ in us there would be, if it were not for the fact that he himself has taken up his abode in our hearts for the very purpose of making us like himself. O how impossible such a transformation, unless he undertake it for us! Since it is a work which cannot be done in a short time, or by the spasmodic excitement of desire and feeling so characteristic of most of us, how necessary it is that we be found constantly constraining him to abide with us and in us, assuring him by the fervency of our entreaty that we have learned so well that "unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it."

It is only by a surrender of our whole being, and of our entire life to him, that we could ever hope to awake, satisfied with his likeness. It is therefore imperative that we learn just what it means to acknowledge that we are not our own, and to learn to live in the moment-by-moment realization that mind and heart and tongue, and all the powers of our being are wholly his. And after all, this alone is consecration-the surrender of the whole man and the entire life to the will of God, in faith, in unadulterated affection, and in action-the life of action revealed in the example of Jesus. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." (1 John 2:6.) Keeping step with Jesus will mean our gaining more and more of his devout and humble temper of mind, more of the deep spirituality of his affections, more of the purity and loveliness of his daily life. Anything less than this, any partial, external conformity to a rule of "what would Jesus do" is wholly insufficient. It is only from his place of residence within the heart's deep affections that he can work upon and mold us into true Christian characters. Only then can we really experience the peace and joy which he has assured us may be ours, and which he has also taught us can be known in experience only by those who are daily seeking to be conformed to the Divine will.

This will mean on our part a moment by moment appropriation of the strength imparted to us by "looking unto Jesus" as the full and complete provision for all our needs. It will mean "always rejoicing" in our acceptance in the Beloved One, and in his all-sufficient grace for every time of need. It will also mean a constant self-examination, a judging of oneself that will embrace alike the conduct of our external life and the habitual tenor of our inward condition *of mind*. As a result we will realize that sensitiveness toward sin which will keep our conscience awake and

functioning in a faithful use of the "sword of the spirit, the Word of God." It will cause us to survey the habitual trend of our thoughts, the tempers we sustain in our deportment toward others, the examination of our habits of conversation, the impartial consideration of what motives may be guiding us in our decisions. We will be exercised to question the probable good or bad effect of our example upon others, the good to edification, or the undermining influences for evil, flowing out from our contact with others. Are they left by us with "roots of bitterness" ready to grow into words and actions whereby many may be defiled, or have we left them seeing "no man but Jesus only"? We *must* be habitually measuring our ways by the life of him who is "our life" and our example, if we would obey the laws of holy living, of true Christian character prescribed for us in the Gospel and life of Jesus.

### **NOT AS THOUGH WE HAD YET ATTAINED**

"Be on your guard, therefore, from the first, against setting your mark too low. Do not allow yourself to be persuaded that anything less is religion [true Christian character] or will answer for you, than its complete and highest measure. Remember that these things must be 'in you and abound.' The higher you aim, the higher you will reach; but if you are content with a low aim, you will forever fall short. The Scriptural word is *perfection*. Strive after that. Never be satisfied while short of it, and then you will always be improving. [For God can work in us only as we continue to recognize the need, and the possibilities of his creative power in us.] But if you set *yourself* some definite measure of goodness, if you prescribe to yourself some limit in devotion and love, you will by and by fancy you have reached it, and thus remain stationary in a condition far *below* what you might have attained. Remember always that you are capable of being more devout, more charitable, more humble, more devoted and earnest in doing good, better acquainted with religious truth; and that, as it is impossible there should be *any* cessation to the progress of the human soul, so it is impossible that the endeavors of the soul should be too exalted. It is because men do not think this, or do not practically apply it, that so many even of those who intend to govern themselves by religious motives, remain so lamentably deficient in excellence. They adopt a low or a partial standard and strive after it sluggishly, and thus come to a period in religion before they arrive at the close of life. Happy *they*, who are so filled with longings after spiritual good, that they go, on improving to the end of their days."

True Christian character is not a theory, it is not a dogma, it is not a theme around which we array our arguments, but it is an experience, an inheritance, a personal realization of relationship to God, and an individual consciousness within the heart, that God's creative, transforming, purifying, peace giving, and holiness-producing work, is definitely going on in the life. It is a life so under the control of the spirit of God, that the one possessing it can say with Paul, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." How much have we proved, any of us, the resources that lie within our reach in that mighty indwelling? How much are we experiencing in the fibres of our being, the penetrating influences actively at work in the Christian character? Do our fellows know that we "have been with Jesus"? Is our present character attainment mostly put on from without, or a living evidence of God's work within? Are we properly receiving and reflecting the life of Christ, so that there shines from us a heartiness, an animation, a simple-hearted eagerness which operates so irresistibly in bearing down on opposition and disarming prejudice, that other honest, inquiring hearts can affirm as *they* behold our joy and blessing: "This is reality -- this is no empty hallucination -- this is of God." Is this asking too much of us in our weakness? -- Yes indeed in our weakness, but not when his strength is made perfect in our weakness. God's way is to make the Christian religion infectious, to produce results in us whereby others will be led into the same experience of his grace.

As "the salt of the earth" are we making others thirsty for more of Jesus, and for more of his character-likeness?

- J. J. Blackburn.

## A Visit to the German Brethren

IT IS with the keenest impressions of the love of our heavenly Father for his children, and deep appreciation of the love of the German brethren for those of Britain and America that we (Brother and Sister Allen, Sister Nadal and myself) have returned from the most intensive visit made to them since we were drawn into close, mutual contact, immediately after the close of the second World War.

The invitation for our joint visit, which had been pressed many months earlier, had not been entered into lightly, and was undertaken only after carefully seeking the Lord's will in the matter. We had evidences, both as we made preparations and as we journeyed, of our Father's love and watch-care, and evidence too of the Adversary's efforts to thwart the will of the Lord. The reception which we received everywhere can be appreciated only by those who are truly one in Christ—those who have recognized the love which has shone from the "face of Jesus Christ into their hearts," and who are determined to reflect that love to those whom God has called to be their brethren.

The text for the day on which we began our journey was, "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust." (Psalm 31:1.) It was a reminder to us of our dependence on him, and an encouragement as we sought to carry out his will. And we knew, too, that we went forth with the good wishes and prayers of many brethren.

Our first visit was at The Hague, where we met Brother Alblas. There is an ecclesia of some forty brethren, and we noted with joy a growth in the Christian way—a closer unity and sense of fellowship one with the other.

On reaching the German border we met for the first time our German Interpreter, Brother Karl-Ludwig Flint. We would pause here to pay tribute to this brother who was to be our close and constant companion for the coming month. It was through much sacrifice he was enabled to make this journey with us, in addition to the many hours of time already given in assisting in the translation of our talks for the German brethren. He gave his time for the Lord, for the brethren, and for us, willingly, gladly, and most helpfully. In his own land he requested that we should not refer to his work, and declined to translate the briefest reference to it. Here, it is fitting that we should make mention of our appreciation of his service, for so often we saw in his helpfulness to us, the highest form of Christian love. The words of our Lord as recorded in John 13:35 well apply: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

On our way to the two-day Whitsun Convention at Kirchlengern, we stopped at Oerlinghausen, by Bielefeld, and enjoyed precious fellowship with brethren. On arriving at the Convention we found some 400 gathered. As we entered, they were singing a hymn in their own rich musical language, and it was a thrill for us as we joined appreciatively in our own tongue, conscious of the fact that our heavenly Father, who could read the hearts of all, "hearkened and heard." Only when having attended such a convention can one appreciate the enthusiasm of the German brethren, and their expressions of joy, in being able, once again, to meet and associate together in the bonds of Christian love and fellowship. While it was obvious that the brethren held varying thoughts on doctrinal and other matters, it was equally manifest that there was a deep and sincere heart condition. At this convention we were first able to pass on the Scriptural greetings from twenty-seven British Classes, and from the five brethren who had, previously, irised them..

As the convention proper concluded., the remainder of the week was devoted to a Bible Week, as they call it. Here, such brethren as are able to remain, continue to gather and discuss thoroughly such matters from the Word as they consider require their attention. We used this time in visiting friends in Minden, Herford, and Lohe, whom we knew well, and with whom we enjoyed rich fellowship.

Following the convention, our long tour began. We visited in order, the friends and Classes at Emden, Wilhelmshaven, Lüneburg, Oldenburg, Uelzen, Hannover, Kassel, Marburg, Furth by Nuremberg, Munich, Stuttgart, Mulhouse in Alsace, France, Freiburg, Herxheim, Mannheim, Dortmund, and Essen.

The Classes and gatherings ranged in numbers from four to forty, the largest being that at the Whitsun Convention, previously mentioned, when 400 were present. The same welcome and the same spirit of love and fellowship was manifest in every Class and in every home. We noted with appreciation the response of the friends as our Interpreter lingered over the greetings from Britain, mentioning Class by Class. At Uelzen we met Brother and Sister Sadlack. Many of the British brethren will remember Brother Sadlack for his ministry and true Christian fellowship a few years ago. Nearby, at Veerssen, lives his brother Emil Sadlack and his sisters, all being refugees from East Prussia. At Stuttgart we met a brother well known to many of us—Brother Reinhold Lauster. With all of these we had sweet fellowship.

We shall ever remember the hospitality extended to us at the various homes, and the happy fellowship everywhere. The welcome we received is not to be described in words, nor can we tell of the loving care bestowed upon us. In Marburg, we were entertained at the home of the Hecht family, with whom we had been closely associated in the days of hardship and want in Germany, when they knew the pinch of poverty and dire need. But now, by the grace of God, they are in more favorable circumstances, and we had much evidence of their efforts to assist their less favored brethren. The house they had built accommodated three families, all related, and they entertained other visitors besides ourselves, some being elderly brethren, enjoying a month's rest and recuperation. The two days we spent there were as a non-stop convention, without effort. From breakfast until midnight the mind was directed towards higher things, helpful discussions on the "Manna," and many other Scriptures being enjoyed. Although there were more than twenty of us gathered under that roof, everything without exception, was carried out smoothly, quietly, and enjoyably. Here, we were reminded of our Lord resting in that sweet home at Bethany, and one felt that the desire of the brethren was to serve the Lord and all who desired to do his will. At the close of the day, in the stillness of the night, we experienced the exquisite pleasure of winding up the steep hillside to a little plateau near the top, and rendering a few hymns unto the Lord, before we went to rest.

At Essen, our last call, and our last meeting with the brethren was on the same happy terms, and in that same deep spiritual atmosphere which had characterized the whole of our journey. It certainly was not without sadness that we took our final farewells from these dear German brethren, who had shown the true spirit of our Lord in their brotherly kindness and love. Many interesting and uplifting details have had to be omitted in this report, but in summing up we would like to mention the following outstanding impressions left upon our minds at the close of the tour:

The constant and most marked overruling protection and guidance of our heavenly Father. The depth and warmth of love extended to us by *all* the German brethren, which we accept not merely as their expressed love for us who visited them, but as a deep and sincere Christian love, expressed toward *all* sincere brethren.

Their continued faithfulness in the Narrow Way, and the practical manner in which they put it into operation toward one another.

Lastly, an impression of sadness, concerning the condition of brethren still compelled to remain in the Eastern Zone of Germany.

- Condensed from a report by *H. Nadal*, Eng.

## **Fellowship in the British Isles**

IT would be difficult for me to describe, in adequate terms, the refreshment of spirit which remains with Sister Read and myself as the result of fellowship recently enjoyed with friends in the British Isles. A trip which at the first was decided on very largely for the purpose of visiting our kinsfolk according to the flesh, was graciously overruled and extended in the Lord's providence so as to afford us also opportunities of fellowship with many of our kinsfolk according to the spirit "them that have obtained like precious faith with us."

The fact that the duration of our stay was very limited, did not prevent, but if anything stimulated, the fullest cooperation on the part of the friends, with the result that we were enabled to attend and privileged to address twenty four gatherings of the consecrated in various parts of the country, the combined attendance at these meetings being approximately twelve hundred.

We were fortunate, too, in that our ministry followed, and occasionally coincided with, that of Brother A. L. Muir, for many years well and favorably known to the brethren in the United States and Canada. It was our privilege to hear him address a London convention twice, to the evident profit of the conventioners.

Our itinerary, which covered perhaps twenty-four hundred miles, brought us in touch with friends in the following places: London, Luton, Oxford, Swindon, Stroud, Aylesbury, Cardiff, Melton Mowbray, Lincoln, Nottingham, Glasgow, Belfast, Warrington, Manchester, Rugby, Welling, Windsor, Central London, Aldersbrook, Seven Kings, Forest Gate and Yeovil, in each of which a very warm welcome was extended us, and the spirit of Christ markedly manifest.

As with the friends in America, so also with the British friends, many developments had taken place in the four years that had elapsed since our last visit, and while some were able to refresh our memory with regard to incidents occurring in connection with our previous visits (in 1922, 1927, 1932 and 1953), we had the additional joy of meeting with others who were not in touch with us on those occasions. A few of these, though not many, had come in touch with Brother Russell's writings for the first time in recent months. Some of these symbolized their consecration during our visit.

In addition to the several occasions of Brother John T. Read's and Brother Paul E. Thomson's helpful and encouraging ministries, many recalled with a sense of deep gratitude the ministry of our dear Brother Streeter in the difficult yet happy days of 1920 and 1922. Fresh in their minds, too, were the visits, last year, of Brothers John Dawson, R. Robert Hollister and W. J. Siekman, whose ministries were evidently much appreciated. Going back still further to the days prior to the formation of our Institute, expressions of heartfelt appreciation of the faithful ministry of our beloved Brother Russell were heard on every side.

In our own privileges of service we were led to deal more especially with the practical problems of every-day Christian life -- the translation of written truth into Christian experience. Lessons in trust as exemplified in the life and experiences of the Psalmist, the Christian's secret of happy, joyous living, as revealed by our Lord in the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, the strength which results from a clear vision of the plan and purposes of God as revealed in the sixth chapter of Isaiah ("spelled out" for us in *The Divine Plan of the Ages*) -- these were among those subjects to which we sought to give first importance. It was a great encouragement to us to note the ready response to such themes in the hearts and minds of the friends. Another subject was the difference between a theoretical and an experimental knowledge of God, and how grace and peace is not multiplied except to those who possess the latter; to those who know not only *what* they believe but *whom*. With one group of friends we were led to consider some of the lines of testimony introduced by the Apostle John to prove to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, such might have life through his Name. Our Master's instruction to pray "After this manner" was considered in more than one ecclesia visited. "The Present Mission of the Church," originally published in the October 1952 Herald, and reprinted this year at the request of a number of the friends (see the Question Box in the October and the July-August issues) was also discussed.

At Swan Bottom, not far from Aylesbury, where Chequers, the country residence of the Prime Minister is located, we were privileged to address a group composed of Christians from neighboring churches, who met in an undenominational hall for the purpose. The meeting had been well advertised, and the audience listened attentively as we spoke on the subject announced, namely, "Faith for Today and Tomorrow." Our lecture, was related to the Chart of the Ages, which the local friends had provided for that purpose.

From one standpoint it was a matter of regret to us to find in the British Isles as in America that the "free" brethren continued to be separated into little groups, for surely it is the Lord's pleasure that there be no schism in the Body--no splits, no divisions. We believe, however, that Brother Russell's words, although written by him in reference to the Protestant denominations of his *day*, were never more true than in their application to the "Truth" friends of the present day. He said:

"We will, doubtless, surprise many by saying that instead of having too many divisions or splits of the kind we now see on every hand, the real need of the Church of Christ is still more liberty -- until each individual member shall stand free and independent of all human bonds, creeds, confessions, etc With each individual Christian standing fast in the liberty wherewith he was made free by the Lord (Gal. 5:1; John 8:32), and each individual Christian united in loyalty to the Lord and to his Word, very quickly the original unity which the Scriptures inculcated would be discerned, and all true children of God, all members of the New Creation, would find themselves drawn to each other member similarly free, and bound each to the other by the cords of love, far more strongly than are men bound in earthly systems and societies. 'The love of Christ *constraineth us*' (*holds us together-Young's Concordance*)."

Agreeably with these sentiments we endeavored to take full advantage of what we too believe to be a Christian's privilege of fellowship, and thus while fully alive to the importance of a correct understanding of every feature of our Father's Word, we did not permit differences of viewpoint held by some on even such important doctrines as "justification," "covenants," "sin-offerings," "chronology," "time and manner of our Lord's Second Presence," to interfere with the free flow of the spirit of Christ between us, but we endeavored to enter sympathetically into the experiences of all with whom we came in touch whose "hopes are built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness." Appreciation of this blest "tie that binds

our hearts in Christian love" was much in evidence, and found expression not only in tokens of love and kindness and numerous little courtesies shown us personally, which we shall never forget, but also in messages of love and greetings which we were commissioned to carry to others of the "Body" whom we might meet along the way. Frequently these messages were accompanied by comforting words of exhortation and promise taken from our Father's Word. Amongst these were Phil. 1:9-11; Jude 24, 25; Ephes. 3:17-19; Rom. 8:28; Mal. 3:16, 17; Psa. 5:11, 12; Heb. 6:10; 1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Thess. 3:16. May the blessing of the Lord "which maketh rich and addeth no sorrow," be the happy portion of our dear fellow-members across the seas, and may "the peace of God, which transcends all our powers of thought, be a garrison to guard our hearts and minds in union with Christ Jesus." In the words of that hymn we were privileged to sing so many times together:

"Grant *us* Thy peace throughout our earthly life  
Our balm in sorrow, and our stay in strife;  
Then, when Thy voice shall bid our conflict cease,  
Call us, O Lord, to Thine eternal peace."

- *P. L. Read.*

## Wit's End Corner

*"At their wit's end, they cry unto the Lord in their trouble,  
and He bringeth them out of their distresses." - Psalm 107: 27-28.*

Are you standing at "Wit's End Corner,"  
Christian, with troubled brow?  
Are you thinking of what is before you,  
And all you are bearing now?  
Does all the world seem against you,  
And you in the battle alone?  
Remember -- at "Wit's End Corner"  
Is just where God's power is shown.

Are you standing at "Wit's End Corner,"  
Blinded with wearying pain,  
Feeling you cannot endure it,  
You cannot bear the strain,  
Bruised through the constant suffering,  
Dizzy, and dazed, and numb?  
Remember -- at "Wit's End Corner"  
Is where Jesus loves to come.

Are you standing at "Wit's End Corner,"  
Your work before you spread,  
All lying-begun, unfinished,  
And pressing on heart and head,  
Longing for strength to do it,  
Stretching out trembling hands?  
Remember -- at "Wit's End Corner"  
The Burden-bearer stands.

Are you standing at "Wit's End Corner,"  
Then you're just in the very spot  
To learn the wondrous resources  
Of Him who faileth not;  
No doubt to a brighter pathway  
Your footsteps will soon be moved,  
But only at "Wit's End Corner"  
Is the "God who is able" proved.

*- Antoinette Wilson*



## Is the Apocalypse a Jewish or Christian Prophecy?

WHATEVER differences of opinion expositors and Bible students may hold regarding the correct interpretation of the Apocalypse, all must agree that it is a Divine prophecy. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." "And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand." (Rev. 1:3; 22:10.) Furthermore, that the Divine predictions are contained in symbolic visions, is certain. "He sent and *signified* [revealed by symbols] by his angel unto his servant John." - Rev. 1:1.

No one will question the fact that if the Apocalypse is to be understood literally, it has never yet had a fulfillment. Literalists must therefore be futurists. When we are prepared to recognize it as symbolic and begin to translate the symbols into ordinary language, it is no longer a self-evident fact that it must be unfulfilled. The only way, therefore, to discover whether it has been fulfilled or not is by comparing its *translated* symbols with history. If, when we do this, we discover one of its symbolic visions has met a fulfillment, we have reason to believe that we are on the right track towards a correct interpretation of its other visions. If we discover this to be true of two or three or more, we know that we have not only found the divinely intended method of interpretation, but also that it has been in process of fulfillment during the Gospel Age.

### IS A KNOWLEDGE OF HISTORY NECESSARY TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF PROPHECY?

Strange as it may seem, we find some who claim that the Apocalyptic visions cannot have had a fulfillment in history, because, *as they say*, we are told to search the Scriptures, and are nowhere told to search the historians. God, they say, is his own interpreter. Such reasoning we believe is fallacious and unsound. How could we ever know that the prophecies of Daniel have met their fulfillment without acquainting ourselves with the records of history? A knowledge of history is absolutely essential to the intelligent understanding of prophecy.

Bible history begins with an account of our first parents in Paradise, and reaches to within about four hundred years of the birth of the great Redeemer, and then ceases until that event is reached. It then takes up the history of the Savior's earthly life, especially the last three and one-half years of that life. After giving an account of his death, his resurrection, and a few incidents in connection with the forty days before his ascension, we have a brief history of the preaching of the Gospel in the Holy Land, in Asia Minor, and in certain portions of Europe; and then Bible history ceases altogether, about 60 A. D. On the other hand, Bible prophecy reaches on to the Second Coming of the Lord in glory to establish paradise on earth. We have no sacred or inspired history of events since A. D. 60, though we do have reliable records of what has occurred. If we are to accept the claims of certain objectors, we are not authorized to make use of these records. We are not to compare prophecy with uninspired or profane history. According to this theory, then, there could not have been any prophetic light thrown on the period of four hundred years prior to the First Advent. The same also would be true of the last eighteen hundred years. In other words, God did not intend that the Church should have any benefit or help derived from prophecy. If we were to suppose a fulfillment as clear as daylight had taken place, we must remain altogether in ignorance of it, unless God should be pleased to add to the canon of Scripture an inspired history of all that has occurred in connection with the Church's career in its contact with the world powers. We can only put aside such reasoning as being unsound and unworthy of our acceptance.

When the Apostle exhorted that we do well to take heed to the more sure word of prophecy, he evidently intended that we should look to the events and occurrences recorded in history to see the fulfillment of what had been predicted by the Prophets; else how could we be profited by giving heed to the more sure word of prophecy? Let us consider for instance the prophecy of Daniel. In the vision of chapter 7, a tenfold division of the Roman Empire was predicted to take place before the establishment of the Kingdom of God over the earth. We know from Bible history that the Roman Empire was existing in its undivided form up to about 60 A. D. However, we are dependent upon profane, uninspired history, to know that it was still existing as a universal empire when St. John was divinely used to close the canon of Scripture, by having; imparted to him the visions of the Apocalyptic prophecy, which prophecy *repeats this very same prediction of Daniel*. How do we know that this prediction of Daniel which is repeated in the Apocalypse has or has not met its fulfillment, unless from profane history? Profane history records a fact that can not be successfully denied; that just such a division of the Roman Empire occurred nearly fifteen hundred years ago. It is then an indisputable fact that our knowledge of the fulfillment of prophecy is dependent upon the faithful records of uninspired historians. The Savior's words, "And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe" (John 14:29), are sufficient to show that such reasoning is false.

Another unreasonable, indeed rash statement made by some Futurist interpreters is, that the events connected with the history of the Church of this Gospel Age are not subjects of prophecy. Those who make such a statement seem not to see that a knowledge of history is needful even to warrant such an assertion! How, we ask, without a knowledge of the history of the Gospel Age, can it be known that the visions of St. John in the Apocalypse do *not* present a connected outline of the leading and important events of Church history? "*A knowledge of what has actually taken place is as needful to justify a denial, as an assertion of the fact. We must know a person as well before we can pronounce that a certain portrait does not resemble him, as in order to assert that it does.*"

"Trustworthy historians record events which *they* neither invented nor caused, but what occurred under God's providential government; it was he who caused, or permitted these events; they are in one sense as Divine as prophecy; that is, both proceed from him. Prophecy is God telling us beforehand what shall happen; authentic history is men telling us what has, in the providence of God, taken place....

"We dare not for these reasons exclude the light afforded by history, in the endeavor to answer the questions: Is the prophecy of the Apocalypse fulfilled or partly so, or is it still unfulfilled? and is it in its general scope Christian or Jewish?"

### **WHAT IS THE TEACHING FROM ANALOGY CONCERNING THE CHURCH BEING A SUBJECT OF PROPHECY?**

God's ancient people were never left without the guidance of the "lamp of prophecy." Is it reasonable to suppose that the Church of this dispensation would be left without this lamp? It was because of a failure to give heed to the predictions of their Prophets, which were read every Sabbath day in their synagogues, and which were being fulfilled before their eyes, that the Jews fulfilled them in rejecting and crucifying their Messiah. (Acts 13:27.) Indeed, their history, as well as that of the condition of their home land, during the last eighteen hundred years, was foretold by their Prophets. Furthermore, their future restoration to favor, and the great tribulations they are to encounter just prior to their conversion to the Messiah, are all described by their Prophets, not simply in a general way, but in the most minute detail. It is to this latter that Futurists wrongly apply the visions of the Revelation. We ask, Why do this, when all the events

connected with these matters were all so minutely foretold by the Old Testament Prophets? It has been wisely asked: "Is it likely that there should be no analogy, but a perfect contrast, in the history of antitypical Israel? Has she no Egypt to leave, and no wilderness to traverse, no land to inherit, no oppressors to tyrannize over her, no evil kings to mislead her, no reformers and deliverers to arise, no Babylon to carry her captive, no temple to rebuild, no Messiah to look for, no judgments to apprehend?"

"Are the Church's foes so much more obvious, her dangers so much more potent, that it should be superfluous to supply her with prophetic light to detect them? Because the Jews were an earthly people, and she a heavenly Church, is she therefore not on earth, and not surrounded by the ungodly? Are her enemies heavenly because the Church is so? Nay, but most earthly, for the wicked spirits against whom the Church wrestles, wage their warfare incarnate, in earthly, sensual, devilish systems, and in actual men, as did Satan in the serpent in Eden. Every conceivable reason would suggest her *greater* need of prophetic light. Now the Apocalypse is the book of the New Testament which answers to the Prophets of the Old. If, then, it contain predictions of the first spread of Christianity, of the hosts of martyrs who sealed their testimony with their blood, during the ten pagan persecutions, of the reception of Christianity by Constantine and the Roman Empire, of the gradual growth of corruption in the Church, of the irruptions of the Goths and Vandals, and the break up of the old Roman Empire into ten kingdoms, of the rise and development of popery, of the rise and rapid conquests of Mohammedanism, of the long continued and tremendous sufferings of the Church under papal persecutions, of the fifty millions of martyrs slain by the Romish Church, of the enormous political power attained by the popes, of their Satanic craft and wickedness, of the Reformation, of the gradual decay of the papal system, and the extinction of the temporal power of the popes: *if it contain predictions of these events, which we know to have taken place in the history of antitypical Israel*, the Church, then we have a *perfect analogy* with the Old Testament. If on the other hand the Apocalypse alludes to none of these events, but passing them all over in silence, gives only the history of an Antichrist, who has not yet appeared, and of judgments not yet commenced, nor to be commenced until the Church is in heaven, then instead of a striking Scriptural analogy, we have a glaring and most unaccountable contrast.

"It is evident there is nothing in the peculiarity of this dispensation, which precludes the Church from receiving predictions of specific events to take place, because the epistles of St. Paul and St. Peter contain such predictions. The fact that the Holy Spirit has announced to the Church events reaching through the whole dispensation, cannot be denied. For an illustration we read, 'He who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way; and then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth and destroy with the brightness of his coming.' (2 Thess. 2:7, 8.) The hindering obstacle, whatever it was, was in existence when the Apostle wrote, and was to continue in existence until another event took place, the rise of the man of sin, and that man of sin, that wicked one was to continue until the Lord's coming. Here we have a prophecy, the fulfillment of which, starting from its own date, reaches to the consummation, and covers the whole interval, leaving no room for a break.

"There is therefore no ground for asserting that the fulfillment of the Apocalypse must be future, because the Church can not be the subject of prophecies whose sphere is earth. If she may be the subject of one or two, she may equally well be the subject of a hundred, and the question must be decided on other grounds. If the first generation of Christians were forewarned of the fall of Jerusalem, we may be forewarned of the fall of Babylon. If they knew beforehand that Jerusalem was to be encompassed with armies, we may know that the power of Turkey, that had possession of Palestine so long, is to decay. In principle, there is no difference; a dispensation that admits the one, admits the other."

## **THE TEST THAT DETERMINES APPLICATION OF APOCALYPSE**

The principal test to determine the period covered by the Apocalypse is a comparison with history. That much of it has met its fulfillment has been thoroughly proved. And as Jewish unbelief and blindness refuses to perceive that the prophecies concerning the earthly life, mission, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, fulfilled the long series of the predictions of the Old Testament concerning their Messiah, likewise it is possible that there may be a Christian unbelief, which fails to perceive that the anti-Christian power predicted in the Apocalypse has met its fulfillment, and that all that remains of these predictions are those that relate to its last struggles to attain ascendancy again, and its complete destruction.

"The Futurist would have us believe that the Church needed no guidance, no comfort, no sustainment, in the long years of her earthly pilgrimage—that he who knew all the trials that were to beset her in the long period of her history, withheld a knowledge that would buoy her up, and enable her to stand true to her Lord and Master. Strange that such an idea should find a place in Christian hearts! What! Shall our Lord be less kind than an earthly friend or parent?"

## **ST. JOHN, ONE OF THE TWELVE WHO MINISTERED TO THE CHURCH**

It is claimed by those who believe that the visions of the Revelation have not yet been fulfilled, but are yet future, that the Apostle John was given a series of symbolic pictures that pertain, not to the Church of the Firstborn of this Gospel Age, but to fleshly Israel of the Old Testament times, to various events and developments that relate to the fulfillment of the prophecies regarding their regathering and restoration to the land promised.

Again the facts compel us to express positive disagreement. The Apostle John, who was given the visions of the Apocalypse, has the distinction of being one of the Twelve chosen by Jesus to specially represent him and speak Divine truth for the Church of the entire Age. These Twelve are therefore designated, "The twelve Apostles of the Lamb," "the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem." All the facts and circumstances connected with their being chosen to these positions show that the object was that they should teach the Church; that they were commissioned to bear testimony to certain great truths that would relate to the confirming and comforting of consecrated Christian believers and their growth and development in Christlikeness, etc.

This being true, why, therefore, should it be assumed that the last book of the New Testament, the Apocalypse, written by St. John, is an exception, and that it was not intended for the Church, Christian believers of this Gospel Age, but relates to God's typical people, fleshly Israel, of a previous age? We ask, What authority have we for so concluding? Is it not far more reasonable to suppose that as St. John, who in fulfillment of the great commission given him had throughout the preceding years been faithful in the proclamation of Gospel truth, was here on the Isle of Patmos receiving further information from the Lord by which he would continue his ministry on behalf of the saints and the work of this Age, and was not therefore given symbolical messages pertaining to Israel's future history?

More than this, the Apostle Paul is our authority for claiming that the Jewish Age and fleshly Israel were in a general *way* pictorial or illustrative of the Gospel Age and those who share in the blessings of this spirit dispensation. (Heb. 10:1-5; Col. 2:14, 17.) As the type or shadow is of comparative insignificance alongside the reality or the antitype, so the Jewish Age and the people of Israel occupy a place of far less importance in the Divine Plan than that of consecrated believers in this Age. We cannot imagine St. John, who was called to be one of the ministers of

this dispensation of the spirit, being commissioned of God to revert to the Jewish Age and the Jewish people in anything like so important a sense as he would be doing had he in the Book of Revelation been describing scenes and events relating merely to the restoration of the Jews in the future. The evidence seems overwhelming that the testimony concerning the Jews and their restoration was quite full and complete at our Lord's First Advent; that the various Prophets had thoroughly covered the ground of Israel's future history and their restoration to their own land, without it being necessary for one of the twelve Apostles who was called to minister to consecrated Christians, to turn aside from this commission and devote the most important statement of his ministry on behalf of merely the future of the Jewish race.

## **APOCALYPSE A CHRISTIAN PROPHECY PROVED FROM THE ADDRESS IN ITS INTRODUCTION**

### **TO WHOM IS THE REVELATION ADDRESSED?**

The following quotations are fair statements of the Futurist's reply to this question:

"The Revelation does not pertain to the Church of this Gospel Age, [but] has reference to the Jews in 'that day.'"

"The Apocalypse does not have for its subject the Church of God, but relates to our Lord's judgment of, dealings with, and blessings of Jew and Gentile, after the Church has finished its course."

Our reply to the above question is that every statement that has any bearing on this matter contained in the Book itself, shows that it is addressed to Christ's servants, the Church. The Epistles of Paul, Peter, John, James and Jude are all addressed to the "saints and the faithful in Christ Jesus," or to the Church, in such and such a place. We reason rightly from the Epistles that they are not for the world, not for the Jews, but for consecrated believers in Christ alone. Confusion has and will always be the result if unbelievers, either Jew or Gentile, take these Divine messages as addressed to them. Why does not this argument apply with equal force to the Apocalypse?

We answer, It certainly does. We note first, that it is addressed to Christ's servants-"The Revelation of Jesus Christ . . . to show unto his servants." Who were Christ's servants at the time St. John had the vision? There can be but one answer -- those who were serving him at that time; those from among the Jews and those from among the Gentiles, who had become Christ's followers, his disciples.

Some Futurists have endeavored to avoid this most natural interpretation of these words, by saying that if the words were addressed to Christ's followers, the address would read, "to show unto his sons," etc.; in other words, because the Jews of the Jewish dispensation were called servants and not sons, therefore Jews are meant.

How unsound is this reasoning! In the first place, the Jews had been rejected, cast off from favor at the time St. John was given these visions. They were no longer God's servants, they were *never Christ's* servants. They could become his servants only by receiving him as their Messiah and by yielding themselves entirely unto him. They would then become sons, serving sons, if you please, not serving servants. No one doubts that St. Paul, while a son of God, and an Apostle, was also a servant. The same is true of the other Apostles and, indeed, all who have come into harmony with God through Christ.

## THE REVELATION ADDRESSED TO THE CHURCH

Again, we read that the Revelation was addressed to the seven churches of Asia Minor, not to Jews or assemblies of Jews living in Asia Minor. St. John was told, "What thou seest, write in a book, and send unto the seven churches." Now who constituted the churches of Asia Minor? There can be but one answer-Those who had received Christ as their Savior and Lord, whether from among the Jews or Gentiles. Again we read the words of Christ himself: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things *in the Churches*" (Rev. 22:16), not to testify these things to Jews, or Jewish assemblies.

And finally, as forever settling this particular point, we have the Savior himself saying, at the close of each of the seven messages: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the Churches"; not what the spirit saith unto the Jews at *that* time, or even of some *future* time, as Futurists would have us believe. "On reading these distinct declarations, simple, unsophisticated minds would surely conclude that Jews and unbelievers have no more to do with this prophecy than they have with the Epistle to the Ephesians. They may possibly be alluded to in the one as in the other, but it is not for them, it is not mainly concerned with them; *it is* for us; Christians alone were Christ's servants in the days of Domitian, when John saw and heard these things; to Christians alone was it sent; the seven Churches represented the *whole* Church; and they take the children's bread to give to outsiders, who would rob the Church of her Lord's last gift.

"It is no use to say, 'Yes! but though given to the Church, it might still be a revelation of the counsels of God about others than herself.' *It might*, the Epistle to the Ephesians *might* have been a treatise on the state and prospects of the lost ten tribes, but it was not; the vision of Nebuchadnezzar might have been a vision of the restoration of Israel, but it *was not*; the visions of Daniel might have been visions of the seven Churches in Asia, but they *were not*, nor was it likely they would be, nor is it likely that the Lord Jesus in his last prophetic communication to his cherished Church, from whom for eighteen hundred years he was to be hidden, would have nothing more pressing, personal and important to reveal to her, than the destiny of a future Jewish remnant, with which she has nothing in common."

Another very significant matter as proving that Christians and only Christians are addressed in this prophecy, is that the ascription of praise in the address recorded in chapter 1, verse 5, is none other than *Christian* praise, as the words, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," very plainly teach.

The very next statement of the Apostle shows who are referred to in this passage. It is those who are to be made kings and priests. We read: "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his father." Are the kings and priests unto God and his Father to be Jews, taken out from either this Gospel Age or any Age prior to, or to follow this? Surely not. The ones referred to here are those mentioned by St. John as subjects of the First (chief) Resurrection. "They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (Rev. 20:6.) Who can doubt that the ones referred to by St. John in Rev. 1:5 are the same who are in chapter 20 said to have part in the First Resurrection?

Again, St. John speaks of himself as a brother and companion in tribulation of those who are addressed: "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the Kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." (Rev. 1:9.) Who can believe that St. John was speaking of the Jews as his brothers! It is difficult to understand how any one can so construe the statement. At the time he wrote, the Apostle was suffering tribulation because of his loyalty to his Master, Christ. The same was true at this time (which was the time that Pagan Rome began its persecution) of many others whom he addressed, as history records. How appropriate, then, are his words! St. John was speaking as a Christian confessor at this time (not a confessor of the Jewish religion), as the words that follow show: "I John, . . . was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for *the testimony of Jesus Christ.*"

- Condensed from the first of a series of six articles published *in* these pages in 1922 and 1923.

## The Question Box

*"Unto the angel . . . write." - Rev. 2:1.*

**Question:**

In the *Diaglott*, Rev. 2:1 is translated "By the messenger . . . write," whereas the *King James Version*, and all others known to me, including the R.S.V., translate it "Unto" or "To the angel . . . write."

Brother Streeter, in his exposition of *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, Vol. I*, pages 100 to 116, discusses "the seven stars" at some length, and on page 108, gives his reasons why he, too, rejects the *Diaglott* translation here. However, I am informed that the Greek word employed is in the dative case, in what is termed the "dative of agency," and that this implies that the "star" or "angel" or "messenger" is the *agent*, in each of the seven cases, employed by God to do the writing. Because of this, it is contended that the *Diaglott* translation "By" is correct. May I have your comment?

**Answer:**

While the *Diaglott* is a very valuable Bible help, it is not free from imperfections. In translating *to aggelos* as being in the dative of personal agency, "By the messenger . . . write," it is evident that Benjamin Wilson failed to notice that the verb "write" is in the *active* voice. According to Dana and Mantey, in *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, page 91, when, in the New Testament; agency is expressed by the instrumental (or dative) case, without the use of any preposition, "the verb is always in the passive or middle voice." In illustration of this rule, these scholars refer us to Romans 8:14: "As many as are led *by* the spirit of God, *they* are the sons of God."

May I suggest a re-reading of Brother Streeter's comments, in the light of the foregoing.

- P. L. Read



## Jesus Himself

I do not ask Thee, Lord, for outward sign,  
For portents in the earth or flaming sky;  
It is enough to know that Thou art mine,  
And not far off, but intimately nigh.

No burning bush I need to speak Thy name,  
Or call me forward to the newer task;  
Give me a burning heart, with love aflame,  
Which sees Thee everywhere, is all I ask.

No pillar-cloud I seek to mark my way  
Through all the windings of the trackless years;  
Thou art my Guide, by night as well as day,  
To choose my path, and hush my foolish fears.

I do not look for fiery cloven tongues,  
To tell for me the pentecostal hour;  
The Father's promise for all time belongs  
To him who seeks the Spirit's quickening power.

I do not ask for voices from the sky;  
The thunder-peal I might not understand;  
But let me hear Thy whisper, It is I!  
Fear not the darkness, child, but take My hand!

What can I ask but Thine own Self, dear Lord?  
Omniscience and omnipotence are Thine.  
Let but my will with Thy sweet will accord,  
And all Thou hast, and all Thou art is mine!

- *Dr. Henry Burton*

## Recently Deceased

Bro. Wm. C. Dirst, San Antonio, Tex. - (Sept.)  
Sr. Frank Hartigan, Columbus, Ohio - (Sept.)  
Bro. C. Hoglebe, St. Louis, Mo. - (Sept.)  
Bro. Robert MacFarlane. Eng. - (Sept.)  
Sr. W. C. Richters, Amherst, Mass. - (Aug.)