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"The Cup Which My Father Hath Given Me"

"The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" - John 18:11.

AS THE disciples were leaving Gethsemane with Jesus, Simon Peter possessing a sword, drew it, and struck the High Priest's servant, Malchus, cutting off his right ear. Whereupon, Jesus said, "Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" thus indicating that the cup was an experience he as called upon to encounter. The cup, then, to which he referred was figurative. Quite a few Scriptures use it in this way; and to drink of this cup, signifies acceptance of, and willingness to endure certain experiences as Christians.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CUP

It is figuratively applied to nations and to the wicked. (Psa. 75:8.) "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, . . . the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out and drink them." (Psalm 116:13.) Speaking prophetically of the Lord, the Psalmist said, "I will take the cup of salvation [redemption]," I will offer the sacrifice of praise. (Matt. 20:22.) Jesus asks the sons of Zebedee, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?" They reply, "We are able." Jesus says, "Ye shall indeed drink of my cup," that is, they should taste of inward affliction and desertions, and have their share of outward afflictions. During the Passover Supper, Jesus said: The cup is the New Covenant in my blood. At Christmastide we commemorate the Lord's birth. So also, in this pre-Memorial season, it is fitting for us to consider, to meditate to upon, those experiences Jesus encountered which constituted the cup he was invited to drink, culminating in his death on the cross. It is significant that the shadow of the cross had fallen upon Jesus as he sat with his little company around the table in the upper room.

As we read the account of some of those events leading up to this time, we can discern something of what Jesus endured. For instance, he had "steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem," and his brethren suggested that he go up openly and with them. His reply was "My time is not yet come. Your time is always ready." Then the public excitement of his entry, riding upon an ass, and the multitudes shouting Hosanna. Later the denial by Peter. The washing of the disciples' feet as a

lesson for them and for *us*. His concern to clarify as much as possible that which he must suffer, and to prepare his disciples for the worst. One cannot help feeling something of the anguish of soul he bore, and sharing with him in that exceeding sorrow he expressed. - Matt. 26:38.

It was as he sat in the upper room with his disciples, that he symbolically gathered up the meaning of what he had been and would be doing for them, as taking a cup, he thanked God for it, and gave it to them. The wine thus representing or symbolizing what he was giving to them: participation in his experiences-his cup. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? - 1 Cor. 10:16.

LIFE OF THE VINE IN THE CUP

Now let us for a moment turn our thoughts to the vine. Into that cup which Jesus held in his hand had gone all the experiences of the vine in the past. We could say the soul or life of the vine was there in the cup, that is, the kind of soil upon which it grew, the prunings and the storms that beat over it, the sunshine, the rain, the crushing of the grapes in the winepress. All these had gone to make up the quality of the wine Jesus was giving to his disciples. Change that past, and you change the quality of wine. Everything of the past in the growth and development of the vine had gone into the cup.

Jesus was putting to their lips an invisible cup of which this material cup was a symbol into which the experiences of the whole of his past life were gathered. All Jesus had said and suffered and prayed and done and was, went into the chalice which he was putting to their lips. They drank of his life, they accepted the invitation to follow him, they identified themselves with him in its acceptance. How impressive must have been the words of Jesus shortly after, when they were walking together through the vine fields to Gethsemane

"I am the true vine, my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth *not* fruit, he taketh away: and every branch that *beareth* fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit. " - John 15.

ALL LIFE'S EXPERIENCES IN THE CUP

Now let us try to trace the experiences of Jesus that made up his cup. In those silent years at Nazareth, when Jesus, as a lad, lived in obscurity, working perhaps at a carpenter's bench, his hands rough with toil, dealing with the commonplace, maybe with the hardship of poverty, with the dull and narrow life of a country village, and with the responsibility of helping to support a family, after the father had died, with the vision all the time in his heart unuttered, he conquered the commonplace. So all these things, both the battle and the victory go into the cup.

When many of us, perhaps most of us, have to live out our lives in that same dull obscurity, battling with the business of making a living, toiling in mine or factory, field or office, dealing with the sordid and the scarring, while all the time there is a vision of something better and nobler held in the heart unexpressed, Jesus has put the chalice to our lips and we drink of his victory over the commonplace and pass along, *realizing* that this is only the beginning of our all upon the altar with him.

Jesus laid aside the carpenter's tools, and went out to proclaim his message, and to enter more deeply into the soul of the people. "Then cometh Jesus," we read, "from Galilee to Jordan unto John. " (Matt. 3:13.) He had been baptized into the world's toil. (Heb. 4:15.) Now he would be baptized into the world's sin. - Isa. 53:4, 5, 6.

John the Baptist was calling a nation to repentance. His throbbing words smote the very being of the people, and they came to his stream for baptism of repentance. Jesus entered the stream. He, with a conscience unstained, and with a character untarnished; he who needed no repentance, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; he, the sinless, enters that line or queue for baptism. (We read Matt. 21:32: "The publicans and the harlots believed.") It may be a harlot ahead of him, a publican behind, and he became one of them and was baptized into a baptism of

repentance. The identification is complete-he took the sinner's place. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. 5:21.) All this was a portion of the cup.

Then came a reaction against this identification. Jesus left men, and the struggle continued in the wilderness. Was this the way to complete, absolute identification? Yes. This was the poured cup that the Father handed. "He was led of the spirit." Jesus being full of the holy spirit returned from Jordan (Luke 4:1) and for forty days he faced the issues, and then came hunger. He must go back to men and eat.

You need not go back. You are the Son of God. That is enough, stay out here, feed yourself by miracle, and live as the miraculous Son of God. It is the voice of the Tempter. The temptation to live apart, and live on spiritual miracle is one of the most real temptations of the spiritual life. Jesus brushed this aside. He would not be content with being the Son of God. He would be the Son of Man. He would live by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of the Father, and that meant for him, identification with men and redemption for them at deep cost. This was the cup.

Then the Tempter suggested other means of proving his authority. If you must go back, why stand down with the people? Why not rise to a pinnacle? Your way is too costly. Why not worship me and take possession *now*? Jesus said: "It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve." Jesus again brushed these suggestions aside, though he knew that the way he had chosen would drive him into identification that would finally mean crucifixion. He had been baptized between two sinners. This choice meant that he would be crucified between two thieves. He would be the Son of man and bear all that man bore and more.

Jesus went straight to the synagogue at Nazareth and announced his program. (Luke 4:16-21.) This is the Son of Man speaking. This announcement of his program brought surprise and delighted wonder from his townsmen until he went on and told them how wide his message was. It was as wide as the human race. God cares as much for the Gentile as for the Jew. (Luke 4:26, 27.) There were many lepers and widows in Israel, but the Prophets were sent outside Israel to Gentiles. When they heard this, matters changed. People are willing to listen to any amount of truth provided it does not cut across their class or race prejudices. They had no room for this young dreamer. They arose in anger and led him to the brow of the hill to cast him headlong, but he passing through the midst of them went his way. - Luke 4:29, 30.

All this also went into the cup, and when we too are called and commissioned, and the cold prejudices close in and try to quench our spirit, let us, brethren, drink of his calm and his courage, and pass through the midst of them to go our way to fulfill the heavenly vision at any cost. Let us, like the Apostle Paul, press toward the mark. - Phil. 3:14.

Then Jesus became immensely popular. The multitudes hung upon his words that fell like dew upon their thirsty souls. The healed went everywhere telling of the compassionate Prophet. The people found in him a new authority, the authority of reality, and when they found him breaking bread to the multitudes in the wilderness, they came and tried to make him a king by force. (John 6:15.) Jesus perceiving that they meant to make him a king, withdrew "alone" to the hills. He would hold to the high purpose of the Father's will for him, even though it meant crucifixion.

The easy, dazzling way to power was put away. He would take the long way to his Calvary. All the decisiveness and the consecration when he turned down a throne for a cross went into the cup. When these moments come to us, brethren, the easy and dazzling way to shine, instead of the struggled, demanding way that leads to our crucifixion upon some cross of chosen pain, let us

drink of the chalice into which this trial has' gone, and surely we will find we are ready for any further trials with him.

Think of Jesus on another occasion, when beholding the city before him, he paused on the side of the Mount of Olives and wept over the city. (Luke 19:41.) And then all the courage of that hour, when he bade them "take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise," and drove them forth. (John 2:16.) And then after the cleansing had taken place and the storm subsided, he was found seated in the Temple teaching and healing the blind and the lame and welcoming the children that came to him there. (Matt. 19:14.) All this went into the cup.

There have been those who have strongly objected to these storm sides of Jesus' nature, the woes pronounced upon the Pharisees, the doom announced to fall upon the city, the cleansing of the temple. It does not fit in with spiritual calm and poise, the marks of a perfect man. But no one can question that what he said about the Pharisees was true to fact. Consider the alternative: Suppose Jesus had passed by the blindness and ignorance without reproof and cleansing-cleansing-storms. Spiritual indignation for wrong is sometimes necessary to cleanse physical and spiritual atmospheres. But we, brethren, must see to it that it is done in meekness. The force Jesus used to cleanse the Temple was not physical force, but the force of authoritative personality-"My Father's." "Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise. " We see the same quality of mind in the Apostle Paul in his epistles. Paul found it necessary to reprove the Corinthians. He was astonished that the Church at Galatia had so soon fallen from faith; and he denounced strongly the Cretians. (Titus 1:12.) Yes, the true Christian needs the stout heart and gentility. We too may yet be called upon to strongly reprove evil and misrepresentation of God and of Christ. Let us drink of these qualities and be strong in the Lord. We need to be bold as a lion, meek as a lamb.

MAJESTY OF SOUL LINKED WITH LOWLY SERVICE

As Jesus sat with his disciples in the upper room, knowing the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came from God and was returning to God, riseth from supper, laid aside his outer garment, took a towel, girded himself and began to wash the disciples' feet. (John 13:4-15.) He was so conscious of greatness that he dared to be humble. Into this cup had gone not only majesty of soul, but it was linked with lowly service, and, dear brethren we who share the dignity and honor of sonship with him, have need to earn that kingliness really is the power to bend and serve. (1 John 3: 6.) Humble yourselves in the sigh of God, and he will lift you up. (James 4:10.) It is in the cup.

Then came the hour of Gethsemane. All he pain and agony and the spiritual loneliness of that hour go into the cup. Was he afraid to die"? Hardly, for he came to die, to lay down his life for you and me. He came to save men from sin. On the next day he would arouse men to greater sin, for they would put him to death. The Redeemer, by his determination to go on, seemed to be loosing in men their worst. A little later he asked that if it be possible this cup might pass, nevertheless, *not my will but thine*. But there is no other way. This is the cup poured. The tragedy and the triumph is not in the agony, but in the result. Calm and collected, Jesus said (Matt. 26:46) - "Arise, let us be going [to meet tomorrow and its Calvary]; behold, he is at hand that betrayeth me." It all went into the cup. Those of us who drink of that chalice into which the richness of that hour had gone, we too can say, Arise my soul, let us be going to meet our cross, and having drunk, we meet it with calm and rest of faith, with confidence in our heavenly Father's grace.

Then they came to take him. Peter, the aroused disciple, rushes forth, and with his sword strikes off the ear of the servant of the High Priest. Jesus rebukes him saying, put up thy sword, and

reaching forth his hand, touches the ear of Malchus, and says, "No more of that! and cured him." (Luke 22:51, *Moffatt.*) That beautiful act of healing an enemy who had come to put him to death goes into the cup. "Bless them that curse you, do good to those that hate you," said Jesus. (Matt. 5:44.) And then when his hands were no longer free to heal, for they were nailed to the cross, he would still say, "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:24, *Moffatt.*) When we are tempted to be resentful towards spite and hate, and we drink of his triumph, the triumph of persisting love that would allow nothing to turn us aside, or quench our spirit of mercy, we shall be able like Jesus to say, "Father, forgive," and like Stephen, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

There stood Jesus before Pilate, arrayed in mock royalty. The Romans had heard that he was king of the Jews. Always contemptuous of the Jews, the soldiers felt this was a supreme opportunity to show their contempt for the race, so they plaited a crown of thorns and put it on his brow, thrust a stick into his hand as a sceptre, put a purple robe around him, and said, "Hail King of the Jews." They spat in his face. They had often wanted to do that to the Jews, and now they would do it to their king. The racial contempt directed towards them fell on Jesus, and he bore it on behalf of the men who were crying for his blood. All of that went into the cup.

There he stood before Pilate accused of many things. He heard his words twisted and tortured to other meanings. He said, "I will destroy this Temple that is made with hands and in three days I will build another made without hands." He was being crucified on misquotation, and he was not anxious to explain. He let it go. He could wait. He knew that every lie would break itself on the truth of things, and he answered not a word. The Governor marveled. Here was greatness that could wait for final verdict. All this also went into the cup, and those of us who have witnessed our work misquoted, our best actions misunderstood, our best motives misinterpreted, and have suffered, if we drink of this cup into which patient triumph has gone, and share with Jesus this poise of heart and resignation to our Father's will, we shall say, Am I not to drink of the cup my Father has handed me?

Now lies and hate have prevailed. He is nailed to a tree, his good name taken away. He is a malefactor. His disciples have fled. He is alone in his agony, beaten back into the dark until it seems that God too has gone, for from his lips comes the cry, "My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?" Everything has gone. But not quite-two words remain. "My God." They could not snatch these from his lips and heart. In quiet confidence at the last, he says,

"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Nothing more bitter can go into the cup. Forsaken by God and man! The cup has everything in it, and when we have these moments of forsakenness, when it seems that everything has gone, we can drink of the chalice and find that nothing is gone while one thing remains-"My God." With that fact within our hearts, we can go back to everything, anything, recalling in our minds and hearts, "Though he were a son, yet learned [acquired] he obedience by the things which he suffered." - Heb. 5:8.

Now, Jesus having tasted death for every man, a tomb holds him, but not for long. The most glorious fact of human history was yet to go into the cup. Out of the tomb he arose, laid aside his grave clothes and came forth triumphant and resplendent. He is risen! If into that cup has gone everything that life can possibly meet-its commonplaces, its toils, its obscurity, its temptations, its blind prejudices, its lonely determination, its bid for compromise, its Gethsemanes, its hours before unjust judgment seats, its mockeries and racial wrongs, its cross and its forsakenness, its death -- nevertheless, there has also gone into its most complete triumph that can possibly come, the glorious truth --

HE AROSE!

Nothing now matters, if God's last word is resurrection. Let life do its worst or best. This saving fact will be at the end for each one sharing with Jesus in this cup. The life of Jesus, and especially his cross, raises every question about life that can be raised, and raises them in the acutest form. The word "Why?" upon the lips of Jesus as he hangs upon the cross, epitomizes all the questions that ever tremble upon the lips of perplexed humanity. The Resurrection answers them all. God's last word is Resurrection, and it is in the cup. And when he had taken the cup, he *thanked* God for it. He took it all as from the Father's hand, *thanked* him for it, and lo, everything was transformed. All of us have to bear our cross. Let us do so thankfully, for only those who have learned triumphantly to *thank God* for it *all*, can turn life from a suffering one into a sacrament.

- George A. Ford, Eng.

Resurrection Prospects

"Our God is a God of salvation; and to God, the Lord, belongs escape from death." - Psa. 68:20, R.S.V.

NO OTHER event in all the annals of creation or history can equal in importance and significance the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is true not only as respects man, but as respects the heavenly host, our Lord himself, and even the Father. Would that we were able to convey in words just a little of what this really did mean.

"Blessed be that God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy, hath begotten us again unto a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." - 1 Pet. 1:3.

The resurrection of Jesus must have brought great joy to all the heavenly host. It is recorded that "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" when the foundations of the earth were laid; and when Jesus was born, again it is recorded that the heavenly host gave praise and glory to God. It is even said that "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents." (Job 38:7; Luke 2:13, 14; 15:7, 10.) Then what must have been the exultation of the heavenly host who, for thirty-three years, had been witnessing the great drama of the Son of God in his work of redemption! His struggle against Satan and the forces of evil must needs be carried through without the least deviation from the course of righteousness; whereas, the opponent, Satan, resorted to every subterfuge and device of which he was capable.

With what intentness of interest, and perhaps trepidation, they must have watched as they saw him betrayed, ill-treated, falsely accused, scourged, condemned, crucified, forsaken and entombed. It appeared that Satan and the forces of evil had triumphed—that the cause of righteousness and the hope of mankind was lost. It may be that God alone knew what was to occur. Whether this be true or not, those hours of waiting until the dawn of that first day of the week, must have gripped them in a tenseness of emotion that only hallelujahs of praise and thanksgiving could relieve when they witnessed the resurrection of the Son of God.

And what did resurrection mean to our Lord? As we can scarcely appreciate the joy that will come to those who are restored to perfection of human life, how can we possibly conceive of the joy which our Lord realized in his resurrection and exaltation to the nature of the Father himself?

What must have been the sentiments of his heart when, in the moment of resurrection, he realized that all that for which he had longed and struggled was now an assured fact; that never again would his intimate relationship and association with the Father be interrupted; that he had fully justified his Father's confidence in him; and that now he would be able to carry out his Father's will in every particular? Excepting the Father, as we must in every comparison, only Jesus could know the extent of that joy, for, as yet, there were none to share his glory.

And then, to climax it all, what must the Father himself have felt when, through resurrection power, he received unto his own bosom his only begotten Son, the dearest treasure of his heart? Has God placed any possibilities of depth of feeling in any of his creatures which he himself does not possess? Could any father or mother possibly know a joy at birth of an offspring that would compare with that which the Father must have felt when his only begotten Son was born to his own nature and station? We, of course, cannot presume to say, but we doubt if any but the Father himself will ever know the depth of that joy.

We do well to recall all the precious promises contained in the Word regarding our resurrection hope and that of mankind, based on the resurrection of Jesus, in order that the impressions made upon our minds and hearts may be deepened, and become unalterably fixed there. Life beyond the grave is possible only through a resurrection of the dead. This is the only prospect set before us in the Scriptures whereby we may be restored to life. The Old Testament writers reveal the resurrection hope in many of their prophecies, though oftentimes, it is true, by statements so obscure, that until something is said or done to reveal their meaning, we would scarcely recognize them as having any reference to a resurrection.

An instance of this kind is brought to our attention by Jesus when controverting the argument of the Sadducees -- that sect in Israel which did not believe in a resurrection. The Sadducees considered the five books of Moses, namely, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, to be the only authoritative teachings, given by God, by which their lives were to be ruled and guided. Therefore quotations from the Prophets or the Psalms, had little or no convincing weight with them. Jesus evidently considered this fact, when, in attempting to prove to them the error of their belief, he quoted from the writings of Moses.

Chapter twenty-two of Matthew's Gospel records how the various sectarian groups in Israel tried to refute the teachings of Jesus. Taking advantage of the presence of the Herodians, a sect that sought to curry favor with Rome by conforming their religious views to Rome's wishes, the Pharisees asked Jesus a question calculated to discredit him with the authorities: "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar?" But perceiving their wicked intent, Jesus said, "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?" Then employing a method that has been a criterion in the exercise of wisdom even unto this day, he asked them to show him the tribute money, and they brought him a penny. "And he said to them, whose is this image and superscription? and they say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. And they marveled and left him and went their way."

Failing to be warned by this experience of their rival sect, the Sadducees had a question to ask, which, in their opinion, would make belief in a resurrection ridiculous. And so addressing Jesus, they said:

"Master, Moses said, if a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto, his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven?"

It does not require any great imagination to visualize the smug look on their faces as they awaited his answer to their question. We would probably have advanced reasons why she should belong to the first or the last husband, and would have had considerable difficulty in meeting the objection, they could have raised. But Jesus, possessing an insight and a wisdom that dwarfed mere human reasoning, answered: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven."

Then Jesus asked them a question, concerning which he cited the Word of God through Moses:

"But as touching the resurrection of the dead have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not a God of the dead, but of the living. And when then multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine."

Although Moses said nothing about a resurrection, yet his words definitely and positively affirm the necessity for a resurrection from the dead.

But what did Jesus mean by this statement? Was he intimating that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had not died? Or that they were already risen? Modern theologians, in contrast with the Sadducees, go to the opposite extreme in their beliefs, for most of them look upon man as being a combination creature, possessing a spiritual soul in a human body. They affirm that there is no death, but that the soul, immortal, indestructible, merely changes its place of abode from the human body to some form of dwelling in the spiritual realm. With the poet, Longfellow, they say:

"Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest
Was not spoken of the soul."

When we see how prone man is to erect a superstructure of belief around a theory of his own, or that of someone else, it should cause us to re-examine our own faith superstructure. Are we relying solely upon an understanding of the Word of God, which has been arrived at through an unbiased and honest comparison of Scripture with Scripture? or are we building on human theories? A true love of truth will cause us to test every belief by the Word of God, and only faith thus tested will enable us to stand in this evil day, and avoid being snared by human theories.

It is really surprising how many Scriptures one can misconstrue in supporting a theory he has adopted as his own. Take this theory of an immortal or indestructible soul for example: to those who accept it, the quotation Jesus cites from the writing of Moses, interpreted in the light of their theory, becomes a, strong pillar in the superstructure of their belief that the dead are not dead. Their preconceived idea blinds them to the real significance of Jesus' argument in his discussion with the Sadducees. Failing to make a proper comparison of Scripture with Scripture, this statement of Moses very easily becomes added proof to them that the dead are in a conscious state of existence somewhere.

Then take the statement of Jesus to Martha, recorded in John's Gospel, chapter eleven, verse twenty-six "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." This, we will agree, is a plain statement of fact. But in ignoring its context in the preceding verses, their understanding is in error. Jesus said to Martha:

"Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus saith unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Manifestly, Jesus is not telling Martha that there is no death, or no resurrection from the dead; but that as the Savior of the world, he has the power to resurrect and to give life. And when he calls the dead forth from the grave, as he definitely promises shall be done (John 5:28, 29), then those who believe in him shall never die.

Another statement relied upon to support the no death theory, is that of the wise man in Ecclesiastes, chapter twelve, verse seven. At the conclusion of his poetic description of the coming of old age, and the gradual decay of the physical body, he says: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Often is this verse quoted at funerals as proof that only the body dies that the soul has gone to be with God. But here again, the words of Scripture are misconstrued, in order to support a preconceived theory. The spirit that is said to return to God, is the same spirit or power of life that originally came from God when he imparted the breath of life to Adam. The same breath or spirit of life is common to all breathing creatures (Eccl. 3:19, 20, A.R.V.), and when imparted to Adam, it caused him to become *a living* soul, a sentient being. And when the body returns to the elements from which it was created, and the spirit or breath of life returns to God, then man is non-existent just as before his creation; and except for the fact that his identity is kept in the memory and power of God, to be restored in the resurrection, he would be forever non-existent.

The same wise man, in chapter nine, tells us that "The dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward: for the memory of them is forgotten." We are also told in this same chapter, to make wise use of our present existent state, "For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave [Hebrew, *sheol-state* of death] whither thou goest." - Eccl. 9:10.

These examples show how necessary it is to give heed to divine instruction by comparing spiritual things with spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:113), and to remember that "no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation." - 2 Pet. 1: 20.

This does not mean that no individual should interpret God's Word, but, as Rotherham translates the verse, "No prophecy of Scripture becometh self-solving." Those who have acquired a general knowledge of the Divine Plan of the Ages (Eph. 3:11, *Rotherham*), have a guide that enables them to understand many Scriptures that would otherwise be difficult of explanation, and so are not nearly so apt to stray from truth by some man-made divergent path.

Whereas the word "resurrection" does not occur in the Old Testament writings, yet the doctrine of a resurrection is clearly taught there. Job says:

"Man dieth and wasteth away: yea man giveth up the ghost [Hebrew, *gawvah*, to breathe out . . . expire] and where is he? ... O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave [*sheol*], that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember

me! If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands."

What could this mean but the anticipation of a resurrection from the dead?

Again in chapter nineteen, verses twenty-five to twenty-seven, Job says:

"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another."

If any one of Adam's posterity ever had cause to think there was nothing left in this world to live for, Job was that one. Tormented by his physical ailments-bereft of all worldly possessions -his family destroyed, except for his wife who advised him to curse God and die-and now, the last straw to his endurance -- falsely accused and condemned by friends from whom he had anticipated sympathy and consolation. When Job besought God to hide him in *sheol*, we may be sure he was not asking for additional torment (as many would have us believe is the fate of those who go down into *sheol*). He had experienced all the torment he could stand. What he now desired was rest; and the oblivion to pain and distress of mind that death and the grave insure. But Job knew that God would provide a Redeemer, and that a day would come when resurrection power would restore the willing and obedient of mankind: "Thou wilt call, and I will answer thee."

David likewise, in Psalm sixteen, verse ten, says (Psa. 16:10): "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (*sheol*); neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." In commenting on this, Peter tells us:

"The patriarch David . . . is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." - Acts 2:29-32.

This, therefore, was a prophecy concerning the resurrection of Christ. But Paul's argument in First Corinthians, chapter fifteen, assures us that the resurrection of Christ, is a guarantee that all will be raised. Also in Acts (Acts 24:15), in defending himself against the false accusations of the rulers of the Jews, Paul says, "I have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust."

All Christians are familiar with that beautiful twenty-third Psalm, wherein David says, "He restoreth my soul. . . . I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." There is a sense in which the souls of the righteous are being restored in this Age, as we shall presently note; but to live in the house of the Lord forever, David's own soul, his own being, will need to be restored from death, and from the power of the grave. That this is precisely what will occur, is proved by the Word of the Lord through Hosea, when he says, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." - Hosea 13:14.

TIME OF THE RESURRECTION

A point about which many have been confused, is the time of the resurrection. This has been due largely to erroneous beliefs concerning the soul, and what it is that will be resurrected. Obviously, if the soul is immortal -- indestructible, it would not need to be resurrected; for a thing that is already alive, can not be restored to life. Consequently, those who hold this view, if they are consistent, are forced to think of the resurrection as applying only to the body. This would mean that the identical elements or atoms, that once formed the body, would have to be brought together again, that the departed souls might reinhabit them. All will then stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, who will send them back to heaven or hell, but this time in their bodies.

There are of course many absurdities in connection with this view that cannot be harmonized with the Scriptures. To begin with, man is not possessed of or by a soul, but is a soul. God breathed into the nostrils of the body he had formed, the breath of life, and *man became a living soul*. And when man dies, there is nothing left to go anywhere. "The soul that sinneth, *it shall die*." (Ezek. 18:4.) "Death is the wages of sin." (Rom. 6:23.) Speaking of man's state in death, the Psalmist says: "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. " - Psa. 146:4.

(To be concluded in next issue)

- John T. Read.

Our Correspondence

We esteem highly the letters of encouragement received from the friends, as well as the Greetings at this special season of the year, and wish all to know of our appreciation and of how pleased we are to have them. The Lord has blessed many of your kind letters to our refreshment of heart. It would be our pleasure to reply to all of these messages, but this we find impossible. We trust all our readers will charitably remember that our office force is limited, and that we cannot do all that we would like in the way of answering, and please accept this as a statement of our appreciation. Our prayer for you all is, as for ourselves, "that we might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."

Ministry of the Word

"Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." - Ephesians 5:10

THE YEAR 1962 furnished a variety of experiences in the way of the Lord, some pleasant and refreshing, others calling for the exercise of the graces of the spirit, especially along the lines of endurance and self control. And this is what we must expect as we grow into maturity in the Lord. Everywhere we went there were loving hearts, warm greeting and ungrudging hospitality. A number of the older friends had passed away since our previous visit. We greatly missed these, but rejoice at the ending of their earthly course, and trust for them a place in the heavenly kingdom. Evidently the empty seats in the various ecclesias across the country are not being refilled. We did, however, meet a number of brethren in different places who gave evidence of being accepted by the Lord as prospective members of the body of Christ, and whose fellowship was refreshing and uplifting. As we journeyed from place to place it was with deep satisfaction that we read our Father's word together and meditates on its precious promises, or studied its exhortations and admonition, or talked about present world conditions in the light of prophecy.

This pilgrimage took us from Florida by way of the southern States out west to the Pacific Coast and north to British Columbia. There was a side trip to Idaho and eastern Washington. Eastbound we traveled through western Canada to Winnipeg, re-entering the United States a Minnesota, thence by way of the mountain States to the midwest and southeastern States to the Atlantic seaboard. From New York we traveled west into Michigan to attend a convention and then southward to Florida. In all we traveled by auto a distance of about 18,000 miles, grateful for a safe journey and blessed experience of the providences aid over rulings of the Lord.

Those of us who were walking in "this way" in 1912-1914 will remember that, in those years, the Lord's people were constantly thinking and studying about the incoming mediatorial kingdom. This kept them alert and provided the impetus to go forward through the succeeding years to meet the disappointments, discouragements, doubts and fears, and, like David of old, to slay these enemies with a pebble from the brook -- the Word of God.

Whether this alert attitude is as pronounced today may be open to question. Yet we are living in a "grand and awful time", and so much is occurring in fulfillment of Bible prophecies that we should be thrilled and deeply interested in events in the World around us.

We dropped in at study meetings and conventions whenever opportunity presented itself in order to sample firsthand the methods, opinions and attitudes of the friends toward the Lord, the truth and the brethren generally. We were kindly received and tried to be a blessing. However, in some instances, it was disappointing to note the rather superficial nature of the studies, the comments indicating that not much preparation of study material had been done at home. With all the helps to Bible study now available, it would seem that more preparation of study material at home before coming to the meeting, would tend to make the meeting more valuable.

There is one type of meeting which is in danger of falling into mis-use today, namely, the Praise, Prayer and Testimony Meeting. In some important respects this is the best meeting of the week, because it enables the members of the ecclesia to *express* their thoughts before the Lord and his people. This is a meeting, too, which furnishes a reliable gauge of spiritual growth and development. It exceeds in value those meetings devoted exclusively to intellectual discussions.

In the latter type of meeting it is possible for the natural mind only to be enlightened, whereas "the eyes of the heart" are enlightened through the practice of the truth in the daily experience.

The Praise, Prayer and Testimony meetings are, or should be, experience meetings.

With all the fears and hatreds in the world today; with the great advances in our way of life; with former "heathen" nations now being raised to an equality with the Christian (?) nations; with Satan's manifest activity to promote godlessness throughout the earth because "he knoweth that his time is short"; surely all of this should draw the Lord's people into a closer fellowship of love and comfort. Is this not a part of the time mentioned by the prophet Isaiah: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast ." (Isa. 26:20.) We are greatly in need of quietness and confidence (Isa. 30:15) in order that we may fight the good fight of faith and overcome the world, the flesh and the devil.

As in the case of our previous pilgrimages, our mission was to exhort, encourage and admonish the brethren, and our heart went out in love and sympathy to all, and in particular to such as lacked good shepherds in their midst. We yearned to see the brethren united in the Lord in one *heart*, even though our *heads* may not be able to come to unanimous conclusions on all matters—certainly not this side of the veil. There was a fine response to this appeal for brotherly love to continue and many expressed themselves as freshly determined to maintain "a closer walk with God."

To the Lord we give our grateful thanks for the privileges of the year and leave in his hands the final results for the good of his people. Very evidently he has blessed this phase of the Institute's ministry, as well as that of its Journal, *The Herald*, and its other ministries, and we exhort the dear members of his body everywhere to hold fast with confidence and determination in "the little while" that yet remains.

- A. L. Muir.

"I am of . . . "

(Serious thoughts for those who labor for Christian unity)

A DISCOURSE ON I CORINTHIANS 1:12

ONE of the deepest and most elusive aspects of the believer's standing in Christ is the fact that all such believers are members of one Body—a Body over which the Lord Jesus has been constituted the Head. The statement of the Lord Jesus that he is the true Vine of which every spirit-united believer is a branch has stood (together with Paul's illustration quoted foregoing) before the Christian Church since its earliest days, yet in all the years of the Church's pilgrimage, it may not be too much to say, the truth of that blessed fact has never yet been fully realized. From those early days the tongues and pens of her ablest sons have tried repeatedly to explain what that sacred "Oneness" means, but never yet have they made the outward organization of the Church agree with the deductions drawn from the Holy Word. It has been (and still is) one thing to hold this doctrine as an article of faith; it is quite another to realize it as a matter of experience. Even in those purer days when the disciples had all things in common, the early company of believers, with the Apostles in their midst, failed to realize that full degree of Christian unity. An Ananias was found among them—a token that other interests had crept in. Again, the widows of the homeland Jews were getting more attention than the widows of the Grecian Jews and dissatisfaction and murmuring arose. While these symptoms were of no great severity and were promptly put right, yet they were as the small occasional bubble rising to the water's rim which showed that there was fermentation down below.

Nor has that idealistic One-ness been more than a mirage throughout the Age. Ever as the pilgrims came to the spot where hope would seem to materialize, the vision disappeared and only desert sands remained.

ROME AND THE REFORMERS

The Roman Church long claimed to hold the bond of unity. Men had only to betake themselves to the repose of her cloistered community and accept as their credo what she was pleased to define, and all was well. There could thus be one fold, one flock and one Shepherd and Vicar of Souls. But no sooner had she pushed her claims to the ultimate, than restless and non-consenting men spoiled the serenity of her fold—clear proof that they were not at one.

Reform followed reform, and many creeds displaced the one. *All* of them read the same Master's words—"that they may be one, even as we are one, " but how to fulfill them was beyond their power. Every new advance of truth made former differences more acute, and made more subtle modes of defining "oneness" necessary. To join the broken fragments into one whole stick was seen to be impossible, but, if they could not be "one stick," at least they could be one "bundle" in which every separate chip could lie alongside its fellow-chips and thus lose its identity in the aggregate of one greater whole. "We are not divided, all one body we," they sang, as they surveyed the bundle of chips, but consistories here and synods there ruled and governed each its part separately. They were not "One," either in form or purpose, and as things are, they cannot be "One" in the Christian sense. "I am of Rome," said one, "I am of Luther," said another; "I am of Calvin," said yet another, and so ad libitum, the whole professing Christian Church had, and still has, its varying party-cries.

THE UNHAPPY CONDITION IN CORINTH

We find the microscopic pattern of the whole Christian Church within the walls of the Corinthian ecclesia. It had not reached the unity of Christ. "It hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren ... that there are contentions among you. Now this I mean, that each of you saith, 'I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ' " (1 Cor. 1:11-12 RV.) Who and what these divisions were may be gathered from careful scrutiny of Paul's epistles to his Corinthian friends. Phrases here and whole paragraphs there describe the peculiarities and differences of this party and that, so that it is possible to construct an outline of these hostile elements pretending to fellowship as one whole.

The churches resulting from Paul's earliest missionary labors were composed of two hostile and incompatible elements -- that is, they contained both Jews and Gentiles. Long-standing hereditary animosities had to be overcome in the converts from either side, and, so long as outside adverse elements did not introduce themselves, these animosities were greatly curbed, if not suppressed, by the exalted thrill of belonging to the same Lord, and by the mutual participation in salvation through his blood.

The first disturbing influence to break into these happy scenes proceeded from the mother Church at Jerusalem. In that then unholy city many thousands who, in some measure had believed (Acts 21:20) still remained zealous of the Law, and strove hard against Paul to maintain the rites and practices inherent in the Law. Learning of the large influx of Gentiles into some of the distant churches, they sought to compel them to submit to circumcision-telling them "Unless ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). Certain emissaries from James and the mother-Church followed in the wake of Paul, and crept into the little companies he had gathered, and in his absence sowed these seeds of disturbing thought. This had happened everywhere, where Paul's intensive labor had gathered a little nucleus of believing souls and rent the perplexed companies in twain.

I AM OF PETER

The baneful influence of Jerusalem had been felt in the Corinthian Church. At least two sections of this divided Church had been created by this influence. These were the parties professing to follow Peter and Christ. These parties held themselves aloof from the uncircumcised Gentile converts, and, where the influence from Jerusalem was strong (as at Antioch, see Gal. 2:11-13) would not deign to eat with their Gentile brethren. This separation of the Jewish element had its reaction on the Gentile element also. Greece had long been notorious for its speculative philosophies -- its communities, as at Athens (Acts 17:21) always seeking to learn some new thing. As at Jerusalem, where overzealous souls sought to blend the Gospel into the Law, so at Corinth enthusiastic tutors sought to amalgamate the Gospel with native philosophy and teach things which the Jewish section could not accept. These were the men who lined themselves behind the name of Apollos, who himself was a native of Alexandria, where Oriental philosophy had established its principal school. It was from this section that denial of the resurrection of the dead arose (1 Cor. 5). Then there were some who misinterpreted Christian liberty. Taking as their warranty Paul's teaching that the true believer in Christ was set free from the Law, they stretched this teaching to mean that they were not under any law or restraints of any kind, and that no act was to be accounted sinful or censurable. All kinds of gross immorality was tolerated and excused -- such immorality as was not sanctioned even in the unbelieving Gentile world. (1 Cor. 5).

In addition to these were others who understood Paul aright and sought, like him, to live holy and upright lives -- some, who, from among the Jews, had found the burden of the Law intolerable;

some also from the Gentiles who rejoiced in the salvation brought into their lives through Jesus' sacrifice. What a strange admixture of outlook and teaching was gathered together in this one ecclesia at Corinth!

Together with the proclamation of the pure Gospel of Grace and the Cross of Christ, there was the enunciation of Mosaic claims, and the propagation of Oriental mysteries, interspersed by the impudent clamor of those brazen enough to excuse the blackest sin. With diversities such as these is it to be expected that anything but division could ensue? Had it been possible to blend the Gospel and the Law, Christianity would have degenerated into a mere Jewish sect; the association of the Gospel with Oriental philosophy did succeed (at a later time) and produced -- papacy!

OF YOUR OWN SELVES SHALL MEN RISE

Without doubt every section could offer (at least satisfactorily to itself) some justification for its attitude and for its separateness, and throw on some other group the blame for the disunited state of the Church. Seeing that neither Paul nor Peter, nor even Apollos, were resident elders in the Corinthian Church it stands obvious that every group must have had some leading man or men at its head, around whose dominating personalities the members of each party were ranged. Apostles and evangelists paid no more than flying visits, then went on their way. Resident elders remained to carry on from where Apostles left off.

This was where the trouble usually began. Division was not engineered nor sanctioned by the Apostolic visitor, but no sooner had he left than comparisons were drawn and preferences expressed concerning the nature of their several ministries. And they who became the most readily articulate were just those who should have deprecated such comparisons and rebuked such preferences. Thus, as the forefront brethren expressed their preference for this or that style of utterance and for this or that view of the outworking of the Divine Plan, the rank and file ranged themselves in alignment with this or that leading elder in his approval and support of this Apostle or evangelist, and his attack upon the rest of the visiting ministers. The rank and file were not much to be blamed for this—they only followed where they were led. The fault was in the supposed shepherds of the flock who, forgetful of the sacred task laid upon them by the Lord, turned away from the ministry of holy things to discuss personalities with their merits and relative demerits. Of course, each group could justify its attitude and make out a good case for the position it assumed.

"If only Paul would be content to be like Peter, and not open the door widely to the Gentile dogs, there would be far more of our own kith and kin embrace Gospel truth." "Paul does not seem to realize that what he gains from Gentile lands he more than repels from among his own people." "If only he was content to be like Peter and James -- men who really saw the Lord, and heard the Gospel from his mouth, there would be thousands more who, though still remaining zealous of the law, would accept Jesus as the Messiah of Israel." Thus spake the supporter of Peter's claims.

I AM OF CHRIST

More violent and dangerous than these was the "holier-than-thou," "go-to-the-fountain head," zealot who said he was "of Christ." Is it assumed that here, at least, was one party beyond reproach, and which knew where its allegiance should be placed? Not a bit of it! Headed, presumably, by some venerable patriarch who had visited Jerusalem in the Master's earthly days, and who, hearing the discourse of him who spake with such authority, had accepted and believed his testimony direct, then carried it away to this foreign soil, there to forget much and mistake more

of what the Blessed One had spoken, so that now it was but a travesty of what it should have been.

It is to this group Paul refers when he writes again (2 Cor. 10:7). "If any man trusteth in himself that he is Christ's (of Christ) let him consider this again with himself, that, even as he is Christ's, so also are we." Of Paul, this section had not one good word to say. They challenged his Apostleship, first, because he never saw the Lord in the flesh, and next, because he did not presume to live upon the brethren, but labored with his own hands. Though admitting that his letters were weighty and strong, they held in ridicule both his personal presence and his speech. Here was "straitlaced," "not as these other men," Phariseeism masquerading in a supposed Christian garb, and justifying it all in the name of him who accepted all.

What was here amiss? Why did all this fleshliness of outlook prevail? Exactly because they had not understood the purport of the Gospel call. It was a new thing in the world. Judaism had been divided into rival schools, Heathenism had had its myriad cults, and they could not just conceive that the Gospel call was of a different nature altogether. Every leader lived for and fostered the interests of his own following. Each one was partisan and sectarian. No single one could labor for the good of all. Not one amongst them could or would say "We are all of Christ," or viewing the broken ranks, say, "Let us all together strive to be of Christ." That was their fault--they were myopic, hardhearted, suspicious, and uncharitable. They scrupled not to interdict, to slander and defame those for whom Christ had died, and who had been sent forth in his name.

TRUTH, BUT NOT THE WHOLE TRUTH

There was a little truth, or some semblance of a truth, in the teachings of each group. What they would not see was the truth held by the rival groups. They did not realize that they saw only "in part," and not the whole truth. They did not see that truth must be progressive and grow from bud to bloom. Each section thought it had "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth," and would not for a moment allow that any rival section subscribed to truth. Each rival leader thought he had all the truth and ministered what he had for his own following alone. To one group and its leaders Cephas possessed the hallmark of the truth -- to another group Apollos was the criterion, to still another Paul, and to the straitest group of all, an earthly Christ. And -- as at Corinth, so has it been throughout the Age. So truly has the glorious ideal of Christian unity been at once both mirage and morass -- a mirage to draw onward, and a morass to engulf.

There may have been some true saints in every section of the Corinthian Church, but no single elder or leader therein was able to minister to all such saints, because the deeper and profounder things of the Christian faith had been overlaid and obscured by lesser and shallower things. Nor, so long as the dividing boundaries were observed could saint reach out to saint over the barriers. But - and this is the great fact outstanding in true Christian relationship -- while their sense of one-ness was dulled and impaired, it made no difference to the actual One-ness in the heavenly Courts.

That actual One-ness is an otherworldly spiritual thing, registered in heaven above. It is a mystic union of kindred souls, joined to the Lord, who died with him in his death, and were raised with him in his resurrection, and are accounted alive because he lives, yet running their earthly course, centuries apart, perhaps, with whole continents or oceans lying between their habitats - and found one here, and another there; one then, another now, -- but spite of all earthly handicaps, linked, and joined up to their Lord and Head. The Shepherd of the flock knows all his sheep and no man plucks them from his hand, no matter how that man despoils the pasture, or fouls the flowing streams of truth.

ENDEAVOR TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

It is not easy to maintain the sense of unity, even today. While the real interests of every sheep is in the great Shepherd's hands, the sense that we are of one calling can be blurred and dulled by an elder's unhelpful ministry. Too much insistence upon secondary things can upset the balance of the mind concerning more important things and tend to divert attention from the all essential relationships. Such over insistence may suit a "following," but it does not minister to the need of the whole flock. It tends to apply itself to only a "part" - and that is Corinth over again!

Mistakes in theology may indeed need to be corrected, and a stand may have to be made for Truth, but the Christian cannot live on negatives or on denials of another man's theology. He must have the positive affirmations of the Word as his provender. And more than that, while "truth" must be, at times, defended and proclaimed, "truth" is not the greatest thing in the Christian economy. The proclamation of truth is but a means to an end, and the end is greater than the means. God revealed his truth to win for himself a family -- and every son and daughter today is greater in God's sight than any spoken means that led them into that relationship. The child is more precious in the Father's sight than even the most correct definition of a truth. Let us never forget that fact.

This conclusion remains. There are some aspects of truth which separate the flock and divide its interests. There are some other aspects that unite, and deepen the present sense of unity. Insistence on secondary things can work present injury to sensitive souls, and draw barriers down the ranks, keeping saint from kindred saint. Only when minds have been dulled by deprivation of essential truth do they reach the point where they begin to say "I am of ... "

Is it not the duty then of every pen and voice to seek the interests of all the flock-of all the brethren known and unknown, both inside and outside our present fellowship and seek to feed the wearied sheep with such provender that will make the sense of one-ness keen and sharp? Then, as any modern Paul may plant or some present-day Apollos water, God can use both to produce increase to the flock.

- A. O. Hudson, Eng.

Notice of Postponement of Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Pastoral Bible Institute, due to be scheduled for Saturday, June 1, has been postponed to Saturday, September 21. Plans are now under way to hold it in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

We are making this early announcement so that Institute members, who might wish to participate in conventions now being planned by Associated Bible Students in various parts of the country to be held during the summer will know that they need not reserve the June date for the Institute's Annual Meeting.

Further particulars as to the hour and place of meeting will be announced later.

Israel Today

How Stand the Jews With God?

A Testimony to Divine Faithfulness

MANY Christians find it difficult to give a clear answer to this question although it is inseparable from the wider question of our Lord's Second Coming. The various interpretations, moreover, are not always confined within denominational boundaries. Sometimes the answer brings together those who, in other respects, are strongly at variance. The Roman Catholic, for example, finds himself broadly on the same side as the Jehovah Witness. (*)

(*) The self-styled "Jehovah Witnesses" are prominent in asserting that "The dispersion of the Jews ever since (A.D. 70) proves that Jehovah God has cast them off from being his people as a nation." Nevertheless, they admit that for 50 years prior to 1932 they and their predecessors also proclaimed the scriptural truth concerning the Jews "that the prophecies of restoration applied to the natural Jew and his return to the literal land of Palestine." (Quotations are from their journal *The Watchtower*.) But scriptural truth deprives them, even of their title, which is based on Isaiah 43:10. That verse read in its context (Isaiah 43:5-15) clearly applies to the nation of Israel.

REFORMATION DOCTRINE

When the Roman Church took over temporal power, describing their rule as "Christ's Kingdom" (Christendom), the assumption was that God had disinherited the Jews as a nation. Jewish persecution followed and even when some Popes relaxed its harshness they did so on grounds of sentiment and not in recognition of Jewish rights. Many devout Protestants, also, have felt that the Jewish part in the death of Jesus and the New Testament teaching concerning election suggests that the Church has inherited in full the promises which God made to the Jewish people.

In view of the attitude of the Papacy it is understandable, however, that this belief found no place in the doctrine of the Reformation, and perhaps it is not merely coincidence that Paul addressed his famous words on the subject to the early Church at Rome. The marginal commentary in the 16th century Genevan Bible (the Bible of the Reformation in England and Scotland reemphasizes the Apostle's words in Romans 11 as follows:

"He beateth this into their heads that the *nation of the Jews is not utterly cast off* without hope of recovery ... the *covenant made with that nation* of life everlasting cannot be frustrate and vain."

In 1641 A.D. Thomas Brightman, a famous Biblical commentator, referring to the Jews wrote: "What! Shall they return to Jerusalem again? There is nothing more certain. The prophets do everywhere confirm it." In A.D. 1754 Dr. Thomas Newton, Bishop of Bristol, wrote "The preservation of the Jews is really one of the most signal and illustrious acts of divine providence. ... But neither the prophecies concerning the Gentiles or those concerning the Jews have yet received their full and entire completion ... God's promises to them are not yet made good in their full extent." He then quoted from Ezekiel 37:21, 25. "Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen whither they be gone and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, even they and their children for ever." Finally, he added "There will be a time when they will be grafted in again, and again become the people of God...." In dedicating his book, by permission, to the Archbishop of Canterbury he added that it had "been first perused and corrected by . . . three of the best scholars and ablest critics of the age, Bishop Pearce, Dr. Warburton and Dr. Jortin."

ABRAHAM'S SEED, HEIRS ACCORDING TO PROMISE

The chief difficulty which some find in accepting the early Protestant belief lies in the words of the Apostle Paul in Galatians 3:29: "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise." The key to its meaning is in the word "promise" which Paul defined in verse 14. "That upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus; that we might receive the *promise of the spirit* through faith." The promise of the spirit had already become a reality to the faithful Jews but now, the Apostle added, it had been extended to the Gentiles. At the same time he made it clear that whilst the door had been opened to the Gentiles it had not been closed to the Jews. (Have there not been Jewish converts ever since?)

THE HARDENING OF THE JEWS

The "hardness" which he explains "had befallen the Jews" was real enough, of course, but it was only "in part", and even that restriction was only for a limited time, namely "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Hardness of heart, the Bible shows, comes on those who do not recognize the reality of the divine purpose and as they continue to reject the truth to suit their own views, they become progressively hardened in their unbelief. (The example of Pharaoh illustrates this forcefully.) It was because the nation of Israel as a whole failed to take up its option (Matthew 10:5, 6) that its disbelieving members surrendered their places to believing Gentiles.

The strong words given through the prophet Isaiah on the hardening of Israel and quoted in John 12:40, have been interpreted by some to mean that the Jews have been disinherited. The Old Testament explains this quite differently by showing that in his dealings with Israel, God always punished them with the very things with which they had offended. For example, God punished them for indulging in idolatrous abominations by giving them a surfeit of those same abominations (Ezekiel. 7:2, 3). Again, when they defied God and took stock of their military manpower, God punished them by drastically weakening it (1 Chron. 21:14). Similarly the majority of Jews did not believe in Jesus, and so it appears that God has allowed their unbelief to develop unchecked to a point at which it became hard for, the truth to find an entry.

But none of this supports the view that the Jewish nation has been disinherited. The hardness "in part" has, in fact, furnished a continuing Jewish representation in what was originally a wholly Jewish Church.

Similarly there has been a token number of Jewish settlers in the land throughout the period of the Dispersion; representatives of the nation to whom God gave the land. And all this, Paul explains in the words, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

HAS THE NATION OF ISRAEL A FUTURE?

What the Apostle was explaining concerned the realm of the spirit and was confined to the Church of Christ but, as W. E. Vine, M.A., explains in his well known commentary on Romans: "They are the object of God's love because of the unalterable covenants made to the fathers . . . Having been chosen as his people, the nation is assured of future restoration."

The assurance of the future destiny of Israel, rests also in God's promises to bring the Jews back to *their own country* "from all the *countries* whither I have driven them." The reality of the judgments which scattered Israel throughout the world, helps to confirm the reality of the promises that *God would regather those whom he had scattered*. This was not the Church, of

course, but the nation of Israel. And so the prophets reveal the regathering as the counterpart of the scattering. In the light of this it is clear that the reference in Jeremiah 16:16 to the "fishers" and the "hunters" whom God would use to coax and force the Jews back to the land cannot possibly refer to the Church. In that same chapter God said "I will cast you forth out of this land . . . for I will not show you favor", and then went on to say, as though it was the most obvious sequel, "*Therefore . . . I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers.*" The Exile was, in fact, a parenthesis which did not alter the immutability of God's original promise. In other words God did not renounce his former pledge to the Jews, but put its realization temporarily beyond their reach.

Jesus also spoke of the parenthesis and his words in Luke 21:24 were the signal for its continuance. He said "And they shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles" but only "*until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*" That judgment was on the Jewish nation, not the Church, and the promise which was implied in the reference to a future time can, therefore, only apply to the Jewish nation. The last question which the disciples put to the Lord before his ascension was: "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" To this Jesus replied, not with any suggestion that they were nursing a false hope but-" It is not for you to know times and seasons which the Father hath set within his own authority." - Acts 2:6, 7.

There are further examples of the pairing of fact and promise of which the passage in Jeremiah 23:7, 8 is most notable. "Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them ." Clearly God did not bring the evil upon the Church but on the Jewish nation. The compensating good must, therefore, also apply to the Jews.

THE UNCONDITIONAL COVENANT

But that third chapter of Galatians which has given difficulty to so many Christians also helps to resolve the difficulty itself. Paul explains that God's covenant with Abraham and his seed could not be annulled even though at Sinai Israel had voluntarily agreed to conform to God's law as a condition of receiving God's blessings. In his explanation the Apostle laid down the principle that God's covenant with Abraham and his seed was unconditional. That covenant not only concerned the matter on which the Apostle was reasoning with the Galatian Church but also included "the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession ." Thus it was when Abraham reached the land God told him to: "Lift up thine eyes ... for the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." Abraham took token possession of the land on behalf of his seed (Genesis 1.3:17) and in pursuance of God's unalterable covenant. It is an aspect which cannot have any spiritual application however, particularly as God told Abraham to see the extent of the inheritance with his natural eyes. The one place in the Bible which links Abraham with a heavenly land is the 11th chapter of Hebrews. In verse 9, however, the writer defines the land of promise as the earthly land of Canaan where Abraham had dwelt in tents. The "friend of God", however, had a longing for "a better country, that is a heavenly", but this conveys no suggestion of the annulment of God's pledges regarding the land of Israel and, in fact, the pledges were renewed to Abraham's natural seed long after the Patriarchs had passed away.

And so one could go on quoting from a long list of promises which cannot possibly be spiritualized but which must apply to the natural nation and the natural land of Israel. Examples include Jeremiah 32:43, Isaiah 41:19, 20 etc. Perhaps the strongest of all the unconditional and restrictive promises to the Jewish people are those concerning the future of the people as a nation. For example: "Thus saith the Lord who gives the sun for a light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for a light by night . if this fixed order departs from before me ... then shall the

descendants of Israel cease from being a nation before me for ever." Jeremiah 31:35, 36. RSV. That promise was repeated in Jeremiah 25:26 where it was also associated with the promise to bring back the nation from its world wide captivity. Here again the promise of future permanence as a nation was made to the nation which was being scattered; not to the Church. The final emphasis comes in such passages as: "I will plant them upon their land and *they shall no more be plucked up out of the land* which I have given them, saith the Lord." (Amos 9:14, 15); and "They shall not sorrow any more at all." (Jeremiah 31:10-12).

To sum up therefore, the Bible reveals that the Dispersion is not the end of the Jews as a people but an interregnum in their national life; that God has promised to restore to them the natural rights and privileges he gave them through their fathers and that their present unhappy spiritual state is for a limited time "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Then the Messiah-Deliverer "shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Romans 11:26) and men of all nations shall turn to God through the Jews. (Zechariah 8:23.) This is to be the great work of our Lord at his Second Advent. Then the Jewish people (for it was the people as a whole over whom Jesus wept) will say as our Lord foretold: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord", and all mankind will recognize in the experience of Israel the faithfulness and love of God. In the light of the prophecies should not the recent reestablishment of the State of Israel; the tragic work of the "hunters"; the restoration of the desolate land and the great regathering now in progress put every Christian on inquiry concerning the Second Advent of our Lord?

For behold, ... I will gather all nations, and will plead with them for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations and parted my land. - Joel 3:1, 2.

I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. - Jeremiah 24:6.

... And they shall dwell securely therein . . . when I have executed judgment upon all those that do them despite round about them and they shall know that I am the Lord their God. - Ezekiel 28:25, 26.

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Houses and fields and vineyards shall yet again be bought in this land.' - Jeremiah 32: 43, 44.

The populous city shall be deserted . . . until the spirit be poured upon us from on high and the wilderness become a fruitful field. - Isaiah 32:14, 15.

And it shall come to pass in the latter days that many peoples shall go and say, 'Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. - Isaiah 2:2-4.

Thus saith the Lord of hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you'. - Zechariah 8:23.

Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers, take no rest and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. - Isaiah 62:6, 7.

- Laurence H. Bunker, Eng.

Recently Deceased

Br. A. Lee Bland, Blackstone, Va. (Nov.)
Br. Arch Brownlee, Scotland (Nov.)
Sr. Elinor Clark, Pawtucket, R. I. (Dec.)
Sr. Leona Clements, Seattle, Wash. (Nov.)
Sr. Eva Dennison, Wilton, Maine (Jan.)
Sr. Jacob van Halewijn, Holland (Oct.)
Br. Herbert C'. Litchfield, Agawam, Mass. (Nov.)
Sr. Helena Livermore, Portland, Ore. (Nov.)
Sr. Grace McFarland, Seattle, Wash. (June)
Br. Harry Nadal, England (Nov.)
Sr. Anna Ostrom, Portland. Ore. (Dec.)
Sr. Flora Whitcomb, Chicago, Ill. (Jan.)
Br. Joseph S. Whiteberry, Chanute, Kan. (Nov.)