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A Meditation for the New Year

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea." - Psalm 46:1, 2. R.S.V.

THERE is a growing conviction in the minds of thoughtful people that the days in which we live are marked by an atmosphere of finality. For some time we have been living in a new era -- one distinct, not only from pre-1914, but from pre-1938 days; an era which might well be called the atomic era.

In his remarkable forecast of the conditions which would obtain at the close of the Gospel Age, our Lord Jesus predicted that there would be "upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." (Luke 21:25, 26.) And surely there has never been a time when conditions resembled his forecast more accurately than today.

Christians in these days, however, need not be in darkness as to the meaning of the past fifty or sixty eventful years, but, through a knowledge of The Divine Plan, and a daily renewal of their consecration vows, are permitted to occupy an enlightened, privileged position. Such was the Psalmist's calm confidence, as, under inspiration of God's holy spirit, he penned the forty-sixth psalm. Though written, in all probability, to celebrate the deliverance of Jerusalem from the invasion planned by Sennacherib in the days of Hezekiah (Isaiah 37) there is little doubt that it has a prophetic significance -- meeting its larger fulfillment in our day. On this psalm, Luther based his famous hymn, "A mighty fortress is our God." Let us study it carefully and prayerfully, that the reassurance the Lord intends us to obtain therefrom may be ours.

Scholars have pointed out that it consists of three strophes, the conclusion of each being marked by the *Selah*, and that of the last two by the refrain.

STROPHE No. 1

*God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed,
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.*

In his *Studies in the Psalms*, the spirit of Psalm 46 is summed up by *Rotherham* as being "that of stouthearted trust in God. God is nearer than any enemy, and more powerful to relieve from danger than the enemy to inflict it. The images employed in the psalm are bold, being formed by depicting such convulsions of nature as are seldom or never witnessed, yet are easily conceived. The terrible *roar* of the *land* in an earthquake, when the *moun.tains* are seen *staggering into the midst of the sea*, and the resentful sea is witnessed dashing its mighty waves on the *mountains* that overhang the shore: such is the scene which the poet's art presents as a figure of disturbed nations."

Another writer of note, *J. J. Stewart Perowne*, commenting on its *primary* application, submits the following interesting and instructive paragraph:

This and the two following Psalms are hymns of triumph, composed on the occasion of some great deliverance. I am inclined to think that they all celebrate the same event, the sudden and miraculous destruction of the army of Sennacherib under the walls of Jerusalem. That proud host had swept the land. City after city had fallen into the power of the conqueror. The career of Sennacherib and his captains had been one uninterrupted success. The capital itself alone held out, and even there the enfeebled garrison seemed little likely to make a successful resistance. The swollen river had, in the language of the prophet, overflowed all his channels, and risen even to the neck. It was at this crisis that deliverance came. When there were no succours to be expected, when neither king nor army could help the city, God helped her. He, the Lord of Hosts, was in the midst of her, keeping watch over her walls and defending her towers. His Angel went forth at dead of night and smote the host of the Assyrians, and when men awoke in the morning, there reigned in that vast camp the silence and the stillness of death. Such a deliverance must have filled the whole nation with wonder and joy. The old days of Moses and David would seem to have returned. The hopes of Prophets, so great and so glowing, yet so often apparently defeated, seemed now nearer to their accomplishment. The times were at hand when Jerusalem should be indeed the joy of the whole earth, when all nations should acknowledge Jehovah as their King. Her towers, her palaces, the temple of her God, stood in all their beauty, saved by a miracle from the spoiler's hand. God had made Himself known there as a sure refuge, and henceforth His Name would be acknowledged in the earth.

As we come to study the psalm ourselves, it is easy to see that much of its language is figurative. In Bible symbology the word "earth" denotes an "order of society." The psalmist sees such an order of society "removed," (or "changed," RSV). Evidently the scene which the inspired poet seeks to convey to our minds is that of an earthquake, (though the "*land*" should "*roar*" - *Rotherham*) as the result of which, a great change takes place in the form of society. The present heavens and earth are envisioned as being replaced by a new heavens and earth, wherein dwelleth

righteousness. (Isa. 65:17; 2 Pet. 3:13.) Moreover the new earth, according to Hab. 2:14, is to be filled with the knowledge of God.

Again, the word "mountains" represents kingdoms. In Isa. 2:2 the prophet informs us

"It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills," evidently a reference to the time when Christ shall reign. (See also Micah 4:1.) Again, as illustrating the use of figurative language to describe *the changes now taking place in every strata of society, throughout the world*, note the words of Isaiah in 40:4:

"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low."

This great leveling process, thus predicted by Isaiah, is the very theme portrayed in our psalm.

STROPHE No. 2

*There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God,
The holy places of the tabernacles of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved:
God shall help her, and that right early.
The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved:
He uttered his voice, the earth melted.
The Lord of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.*

In the first strophe, the fact that these catastrophes of nature are intended as symbols is not specifically stated. The psalmist doubtless assumes that his readers will understand such an elementary matter. But in the second strophe he applies these natural catastrophes. (Psa. 46:6.) He shows them to be symbols of nations. And his point may easily be that, if we are able to trust in God, who is able to control the mighty forces of nature, should we not also be able to trust in him, as he deals with the mighty forces of kings and peoples? He is just as able to control them. They may, and doubtless do, seem powerful enough to us, but to him they are but as "the small dust of the balance . . . all nations before him are as nothing." - Isa. 40:15-17. Remembering this, we shall be able to repose in him, and be at peace in our hearts.

However, before reaching Psa. 45:6, the psalmist has a word of peace to speak to the Lord's true followers in Psa. 46:4 and Psa. 46:5. His first word concerns a river-the river of truth and grace, the streams of which bring rest, peace, comfort. To those who, by faith and consecration, have entered into covenant relationship with God, and have been given the spirit of sonship-to such is granted the peace of God, which passeth understanding. (Phil. 4:7.) In the Millennial Age, at the threshold of which we stand today, these streams will flow out as a river. Meantime, as rivulets they refresh and stimulate all those who are walking in the narrow way.

Such refreshment of spirit comes to us particularly in connection with increased understanding of our Father's word -- and conscious determination, by his grace, to bring our lives ever more completely into line with his will for us. Thus, understanding his plans, and watching them mature, even granted the privilege of being co-laborers with him in some small measure, we find ourselves realizing the "help" promised in verse 5; which help we confidently expect to have continued to us, until our resurrection change, "*right early*," or, as *Rotherham* translates: "*at the approach of the morning*."

The word "tabernacles," in Psa. 46:4, is in the plural, which is puzzling, until one learns that it is an instance where the figure of speech known as the *plural of majesty* is employed. This plural, whenever it occurs, simply means that "great" or "much" or some similar adjective is to be understood as added to the noun. In this case, not two or more tabernacles, but one very great tabernacle is the thought; not great in size, but in glory or importance.

In our study of *Tabernacle Shadows*, we have learned, not only that God dwelleth between the cherubims (Isa. 37:16; Psa. 80:1), but that during our time here we are to live in a condition represented by the "holy" of the tabernacle. There it is that we find ourselves enjoying the light which comes from the golden candlestick; being nourished by the bread of presence; and worshipping daily at the golden altar. Here is the source of our strength, the source of our growth and development as new creatures in Christ Jesus; and so long as we continue in the holy we are immune to the fears of the world. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High [i.e., in the holy, in the condition of consecration], shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psa. 91:1.)

The further word of Psa. 46:5, that "God is in the midst of her," is surely one that brings a sense of strength and security. It suggests, too, the true basis of Christian unity. As with the nation of Israel under Moses, Jehovah was in the center of each encampment, directing its affairs and resolving differences, so, only in a much higher and grander sense, is he the center of affairs in connection with spiritual Israel, leading them onward to final victory. The thought that our Father directs the experiences of us each, and that nothing occurs in our lives without his knowledge and permission - and without him being alongside to help - is very precious to us; surely one which proves most heartening to us, as we recall it from time to time during the days of our pilgrimage.

Moreover, the psalmist's additional assurance in this verse (Psa. 46:5) ought not to be allowed to pass unnoticed. He says that, because God is in the midst of her -- the Church -- "she shall not be moved." Other kingdoms great and small shall be, but not her. We, the church, are on our way to receive "a kingdom which *cannot be moved*." (Heb. 12:28.) Early in the morning of the Millennial Day we have been helped and strengthened by our Father, guided through the complexities of this life, shown his plan, and preserved from the snares and pitfalls of the Adversary. And soon the journey will have ended! How delighted are we at the prospect! -- not alone because it will bring our own deliverance, but also because the opportunity will be extended to all mankind to be set free from the thralldom of sin and death. Surely this kingdom for which we have so long prayed: "Thy Kingdom Come," is the "desire of all nations" spoken of by Haggai (Hag. 2:7), although the nations do not now realize it.

In Psa. 46:6 the psalmist reminds us that, whereas the nations have roared, and the kingdoms have staggered, nevertheless, when *God* speaks, his voice is bound to be heard and obeyed. Louder than the roar of nations is the voice of God. At the sound of *his* voice, the earth (the order of society) melts. The words of the psalmist here find an echo in 2 Pet. 3:10:

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

But Peter does not stop there. He has an encouraging word a little further on, in Psa. 46:13 "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. "

STROPHE No. 3

*Come, behold the works of the Lord,
What desolations he hath made in the earth.
He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;
He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;
He burneth the chariot in the fire.
Be still, and know that I am God:
I will be exalted among the nations;
I will be exalted in the earth.
The Lord of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.*

Are Wars to Cease? -- One of our free booklets bears this title. In it the position is developed, from the scriptures, that wars *will cease*. Psalm 46:9 of our psalm declares that they are to cease. They will cease, because God will make them cease. They will cease, when God has permitted such desolation

and horrors that those who wage wars will be compelled to stay the carnage. Just how and when he will put an end to war, we are not wise enough to say. It surely must be very soon, or the entire race of mankind will be destroyed. When he *does* say "Cease," he will do so in such manner that all *will know* that the one speaking is God, and that he must be obeyed. Then will he be *exalted among the nations*.

Something of these sentiments must have been in the mind of the poet (Lord Byron) when he penned those famous lines on "The Destruction of Sennacherib," reprinted below.

The psalmist concludes with the familiar benediction: "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah." Here, once again, we are reminded of the infinite power whereby God can subdue the entire universe unto himself; reminded also of the fatherly love revealed in his word. Knowing that both his power and love are ever combined on our behalf, our hearts may well respond in those noble lines of Luther

"A mighty fortress is our God, A bulwark never failing; Our helper he amid the flood Of mortal ills prevailing."

- *Condensed from an article written by A. L. Muir in collaboration with P. L. Read -- published in the October, 1961 Herald. Reprinted here by request.* .

The Destruction of Sennacherib

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold ;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and forever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail;
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

Israel Today

ARTHUR W. KAC, M.D., well and favorably known to *Herald* readers as the author of *The Rebirth of the State of Israel* and *The Spiritual Dilemma of the Jewish People* has long been a warm friend of our Institute. Many of our readers will recall his article *Israel's Fifteenth Anniversary* published in our *Herald* for November 1963.

In addition to his full-time duties as a consultant radiologist, Dr. Kac manages to serve as executive editor of *The American Hebrew Christian*. In the Summer 1966 issue of that quarterly magazine, Dr. Kac offers some penetrating *Editorial Comments* on the Israeli situation today, and even notes, with some degree of alarm, the possibility of a changed climate being brought about by unfavorable developments occurring in America, "in which the position of the Jews will no more be secure." His *Editorial Comments* follow.

- Ed. Com.

Is America Different?

In an editorial in the *Jewish Spectator* of February 1960, the writer draws a parallel between the position of the Jews in Germany in the period following the First World War, and the Jewish position in America in the post-World War Two period. In the 'twenties and early 'thirties - just before the rise of the Nazis - German literature was dominated by Jewish writers, such as Jacob Wassermann, Frantz Werfel, Arthur Schnitzler, Stefan Zweig, Arnold Zweig, and many others. Hitler was not wrong when he complained that German culture had become Judaized.

At the present time many Jews occupy top places in American fiction, as for example, Saul Bellow, Meyer Levin, Bernard Malamud, Norman Mailer, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Herman Wouk, and a host of others, less well known. Can we be sure, the editor asks, that Jewish destiny in America will be different from what it was in Germany? The writer reminds us that in the past nineteen centuries, Jews living in the major Jewish centers felt themselves secure at one time or another. But subsequent events proved that none remained indefinitely secure. Will the fate of the Jews in America follow this historical pattern? The editorial rightly observes that adversity on a large scale unleashes the beast in people, no matter who they are. Should a disaster of major proportions strike America, can we be sure that there will not be a temptation to make the Jew the scapegoat, as it happened in so many other countries in various periods of history?

We can only commend the writer of the editorial for his sound evaluation of certain well established trends in Jewish history. Our answer to this perplexing problem is that as long as Biblical Christianity continues to exert a strong influence in the lives of the American people, America will remain different. What troubles us, Hebrew Christians, is that American Jews are hard at work to erase Christian influence from American life. Should they -- God forbid -- succeed, and the American people will cease to regard the Bible as the Word of God, and the Jewish people as the people of the Book, then Jews will unwittingly have helped to bring about a changed climate in America, in which the position of the Jews will no more be secure.

Israel's Spiritual Role

Certain Jewish spokesmen have of late voiced their disappointment over the failure of the State of Israel to reflect the age-old prophetic and messianic ideals of the Jewish people. This problem forms the subject of a recent book entitled *The Higher Freedom* by Dr. David Polish, an

American Rabbi. Dr. Polish traces this situation back to the preparatory period of Zionism in which the concept of rescuing Jews from physical or national extinction was equated with the concept of messianic redemption. The book was reviewed by Charles E. Shulman in a recent issue of *Congress BI-Weekly*. The reviewer admits that Dr. Polish *will* find many among the readers of his book who will agree with his position that Israel has a role to play other than that of assuring mere physical or national survival of the Jewish people. He pleads for more patience with Israel. He attributes the apparent lack of messianic idealism in Israel to the unusual circumstances amidst which Israel regained her statehood, to the necessity to provide homes and jobs for hundreds of thousands of homeless and penniless Jews, and to defend the country against Arab hostility. Israel's spiritual potential, he states, should not be measured by the present state of affairs.

Israel The Lost Vision

The same problem pertaining to the secular trend of present-day Israel is discussed by Dr. Nahum Goldmann in an article under the above title in another issue of *Congress Bi-Weekly*. Dr. Goldmann is an eminent Zionist who played an important part in some of the events leading up to the creation of the State of Israel. Dr. Goldmann reminds us that the aim of Zionism had been to create a territorial center which would express and realize the lofty ideals of Jewish history. That Israel should become just another state was never the Zionist ideal. For the Jews were never intended to be just another nation, and Israel's faith just another religion.

But Dr. Goldmann laments the fact that things did not turn out just the way Zionism hoped they would. The present State of Israel, Dr. Goldmann says, began like all other states: it began in war, and after eighteen years it still knows no peace. And yet, we are told, that from the very beginning of its history Zionism had counted on reaching a friendly agreement with the Arabs and on living in peace with all nations of the Middle East. The present unfortunate state of affairs, we are told, is contrary to everything which Zionism aimed for and dreamed of. According to Dr. Goldmann, one of the consequences of Israel's rebirth in war and strife is the excessive respect which Israeli Jews have acquired for physical strength, "Not with power but with the spirit," Dr. Goldmann declares, is not the slogan of present-day Israel.

We regret to say that we do not believe that Dr. Goldmann's analysis of the present situation as pertaining to Israel is satisfactory. To begin with, the first State of Israel which came into existence under the leadership of Joshua was also born in war and strife. The Promised Land was not handed on a silver platter to the Israelites of the wilderness generation. In place of Arabs, they were opposed by a number of well-armed and fortified kingdoms in the land of Canaan. If any conflict should have generated in its victorious participants a sense of pride in themselves and a deep respect for sheer physical force, it was that war between the Israelites and the Canaanites. But what the Biblical record tells us is that from the beginning to the end of that conflict the Israelites were convinced of the fact that their victory was due to God's intervention on their side. They knew that the real commander-in-chief in that war was not Joshua but Jehovah of Hosts.

In 1947, in compliance with a United Nations resolution, the Jewish community in Palestine proclaimed the formation of the State of Israel. The neighboring Arab states responded to this action by marching their armies into Palestine, with the avowed intention of destroying the newly born state. The whole Jewish community in Palestine numbered at that time about 600,000 people, including men, women, and children. Considerably outnumbered, and poorly equipped though they were, the Palestinian Jews rose and with their bare hands, as it were, rolled back the Arab invaders. Did not this victory over the invading Arab armies testify of God's intervention on the side of the Jews, just as much as in the war against the Canaanites under Joshua? Certainly!

And from what we know, many Palestinian Jews looked upon the outcome of their war with the Arabs as another miracle in their miracle filled history.

If the present State of Israel displays nonreligious trends, the Jews of Israel should not be blamed for it. In the first place, political Zionism which gave birth to the State of Israel has been a non-religious movement from its inception. When in the nineteenth century religious Judaism began to fall apart, Zionism stepped into the breach and rallied large numbers of Jews under its banner. But Zionism began and remained a secular, political movement of Jewish nationalism. Today, the vast majority of Jews, in America and other countries outside of Israel, follow a secular way of life. The Jews of the State of Israel are no exception to this rule. It is not undue respect for, or reliance on, physical force on the part of Israeli Jews, which is responsible for Israel's failure to reflect the prophetic and messianic ideals of Jewish history. It is rather the failure of religious Judaism, in and outside Israel, to satisfy the spiritual needs and desires of the Jewish people of today, which is at the root of the whole trouble.

Faith for Today and Tomorrow

"To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." - 1 Cor. 8:6.

SOME years ago I attended a YMCA forum which had as its theme: "Beliefs That Matter." There were from 150 to 200 men present, all interested in promoting the welfare of youth. Included amongst those who participated in the discussion were, perhaps, a dozen college presidents; the forum itself being presided over by Dr. Sidney E. Smith, at that time President of Toronto University.*

* Later Canadian Foreign Secretary.

When the opportunity presented itself, I expressed the thought that perhaps the most important belief with which a young man starting out in life could be equipped, was belief in the existence of the one true God; that he is perfect in wisdom, justice and love; possesses almighty power; and has a purpose, sure of accomplishment, that, under his overruling providence, right will ultimately triumph, wrong be forever suppressed.

This belief I regard as basic -- essential alike for Catholic, Protestant, and Jew. Without such belief, a young man is like a ship at sea without a rudder; with it, if he continue to make progress, he will weather all the storms of life, and eventually make port. Not only so, but while this has always been true, it is particularly true today, in view of the conditions through which the world is passing.

How is this basic belief to be obtained by a young man just starting out in life, and how are we ourselves to retain this faith, and not only retain it, but strengthen it, exercise it and nourish it, in these difficult times? It is to this question we address ourselves in the paragraphs which follow.

FAITH NOT CREDULITY

In the first place, this basic faith must be distinguished from credulity. Credulity is a disposition to believe without sufficient evidence. Faith, on the other hand, is a firm persuasion as to the truth of a matter, on the grounds of satisfactory evidence. While it is true that we must sometimes trust God where we cannot trace him, nowhere in the Scriptures are we taught to exercise a blind faith in anyone, not even in God.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us in chapter 11, verse 6, that "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." From this text we see that the very beginning of faith is a conviction that God is. How do we reach this conviction? I answer: By knowledge.

Let me illustrate this point: Two boys are out in the woods one day, when they come across a watch lying on the ground, in good condition, ticking away the moments. What do these boys conclude as to the origin of the watch? Do they say one to the other: "What a wonderful specimen! It must have taken thousands of years, perhaps millions, for all those tiny little parts to arrange themselves in such a fascinating and useful way as to record the passing hours! You know very well those boys would say nothing of the sort. They would rightly assume that

somewhere in this wide world there must be a watchmaker. Even though the opportunity of meeting the watchmaker were never theirs, they would still believe in his existence.

If, then, a watch implies the existence of a watchmaker, what does a watchmaker imply? A watchmaker's Maker, most assuredly! We behold the heavens declaring *his* glory, the firmament showing his handiwork. We note how fearfully and wonderfully made we ourselves are, and on this knowledge we reach forward into something that is not knowledge but faith -- we *believe* God is.

BELIEF BASED ON KNOWLEDGE

Belief in God's existence, then, is based on knowledge. Belief in God's character, that he is just, wise, benevolent, gracious, slow to anger, plenteous in mercy, also comes about through previous knowledge of him. It is not blind credulity, but firm persuasion, based on satisfactory evidence.

Perhaps another simple illustration will make this clear. A report reaches us, let us suppose, that a close friend, whom we have known for many years, was last seen on the streets of a distant city in a condition of drunkenness. Someone who had never met our friend, or whose knowledge of him was very limited, might remark: "Dear me, that's too bad; what a pity; another good man gone wrong"; or words to that effect. How much faith does that one exercise in our friend? None at all. Why? Because he has no knowledge of him. Men do foolishly drink to excess, and for all he may know, our friend may have done so.

But what happens when the report reaches us? It is instantly rejected by us, doubtless with a measure of indignance that the good name of our friend should have been slandered by so incredible a story being circulated about him. Why so different a reaction on our part? Because we know our friend.

However, we do not really *know* the story to be untrue. We *know* no more about the report of drunkenness than does the man who failed to exercise faith in our friend. We could not appear in court and solemnly affirm that of our own personal knowledge the report which reached us is untrue. But from the knowledge we do have of our friend, gained through years of close association and happy fellowship, we are convinced that the report is untrue. With this knowledge as a basis we are able to exercise faith beyond actual knowledge, and confidence in our friend remains unshaken.

Faith in our friend, then, comes as a result of prior acquaintance with him. It is *thus* that faith in God comes.

At this point, some one may say: With what you have said thus far, I am in very good agreement. There is no question in my mind but that belief in God, and in the ultimate triumph of good over evil, is basic and, praise the Lord, such basic belief I have. And I intend to nourish it along the lines you have indicated, namely, by getting better acquainted with God and with his plans. May I ask: Have you any specific suggestions which I might adopt?

To this I reply: Yes, I do have. Out of a number, let me briefly mention four, which I am trying to put into practice myself, and which, with due humility, I venture to submit for your adoption.

STUDY THE BIBLE

First: Study the Bible. Study it carefully, prayerfully, bringing an alert mind to bear on its lessons; and study it regularly. Make notes as you go along for later review.

The Bible bears on its surface a most remarkable claim. It claims to be nothing less than the revelation to man of the thoughts and purposes of God with respect to the race of mankind. Examine this claim. Examine it yourself. Do not delegate the job to another. Certainly you may use all the helps available; indeed you should do so. There are several translations, each throwing a little special light on the text; there are concordances and other up-to-date helps to be had, which will prove invaluable. One of the best helps to the study of the Bible I know of is a little book written some years ago for the special benefit of beginners. It is called "*The Divine Plan of the Ages.*" * Use all of these helps, but remember -the study must be done by you, yourself. No one can do it for you. There is no royal road to learning.

*See description of our Pocket Edition on the back page.

Able students of the Bible tell us, not only that its claim to be the revelation of the mind of God is well verified, but that the Bible is a veritable gold mine.

In 2 Timothy 2:15 St. Paul instructs Timothy that he should study to show himself "approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." How does one *rightly* divide the word of truth? Experience has taught us that the way which yields the most satisfactory results is to divide it dispensationally -- to take note of the times and seasons; to relate the truths of the Bible to the epochs or eras to which they belong. Broadly speaking, the Bible unfolds God's dealings with mankind, as they relate to three great dispensations- three great epochs or eras: (1) the age before the flood, (2) the period of time which has elapsed since the flood, and (3) the age on which we are about to enter. All three of these ages have reference to the same planet, namely, the earth on which we now live. To those who have been under the impression that the Bible teaches that the earth is to be destroyed by fire, it will come with something of a surprise to learn that the Bible does not so teach. On the contrary, the Scriptures declare that "the earth abideth forever." This statement appears in the Book of Ecclesiastes, chapter 1, verse 4. Consequently, and notwithstanding all talk of atomic energy and hydrogen bombs, I look for no dissolution of this planet.

ONE EARTH-THREE AGES

Three ages are mentioned in the Bible, each in connection with this selfsame earth, which continues throughout all three. For some years now, competent students of the Scriptures have held that we have reached the end of the second of these ages, and are about to enter the third. Indeed, some assert it as their belief that the ends of these ages overlap, and that even as the second is closing, the third has already begun. Be that as it may, all thinking men and women today are united in their belief that great changes are impending in the affairs of mankind.

This suggestion, that the Bible be studied dispensationally, is not a new idea. There is an old Latin proverb which reads: "*Distinguite tempora et concordabunt scripturae.*" Translated into English, this proverb reads: "Distinguish the periods and the Scriptures will harmonize." Yes, many apparently conflicting statements are seen to harmonize when allocated to the particular periods to which they relate. Rightly divided, the Scriptures show us the true character of God; why he has permitted evil for a season; when he intends to suppress it; why the world has reached

its present state of chaos; what he proposes to do about it, and how; they show us also how we may best adjust the pattern of our lives to fit into his overruling plan.

In 2 Peter 3:4-14, each of these three worlds or ages is referred to as a separate "heavens and earth." Here the word "heavens" symbolizes human government and social arrangements. It is sufficient to note here that the second of these "worlds" or "ages" or "heavens and earth," namely, the one in which we live today (this "present evil world" as it is termed by the Apostle Paul in Gal. 1:4) is about to pass away. St. Peter tells us this in his second letter, chapter 1, verse 7 (2 Pet. 1:7). According to an Old Testament Prophet (Zephaniah 1:18) the earth is to be destroyed, not with literal fire, but with the symbolic fire of judgment. The present order or arrangement of government and society (not that of the physical sky and earth) will pass away. Nay, it is even now in the process of passing away. The present "heavens" *must* give place to the "new heavens" -- that is, to Christ's spiritual control. The present "earth," -- that is, human society as now organized--must symbolically "melt," and be "dissolved." It will be succeeded by a "new earth," that is, society reorganized, in harmony with earth's new Prince-Christ. Righteousness, peace, and love will rule among men when present arrangements have given place to the new and better Kingdom, the basis of which will be the strictest justice.

In harmony with this symbolic use of the words "world" and "fire," many will recall the graphic description of affairs by Woodrow Wilson, just before the United States entered the first World War: "The whole world is on fire," said he, "and happy shall we be if a spark does not set us on fire also."

ARMAGEDDON IMMINENT

Before Woodrow Wilson came into office, another President, Theodore Roosevelt, had used a word which today is well known, but which, when he uttered it sounded strange and unfamiliar to the reporters - a word which sent them searching, not their dictionaries only, but their Bibles. It was the word "Armageddon."

Armageddon, the reporters discovered, was the name given to the plain of Esdraelon, the scene of many battles recorded in the Old Testament; and hence the prophetic scene of the great battle between truth and error, right and wrong, love and hatred, with which this present "world" or "age" is to close (Rev. 16:16). The Battle (or, rather the War) of Armageddon, which even in Theodore Roosevelt's time seemed imminent, and to which the First World War undoubtedly led, is fast approaching. Wise men of the world recognize this. For years they have seen the elements of this social conflagration in preparation. Selfishness, increase of knowledge, concentration of wealth, wrong ambition, fear and despair are the ingredients whose friction has set the angry passions of the world aflame, causing its various "elements" to melt in the "fervent heat" (2 Pet. 3:10).

This outlook, which statesmen are at their wits' end to avert, would occasion us only heartache, were it not for the assurance of the Scriptures that the end results shall prove beneficial, overthrowing the reign of selfishness, and establishing, through Christ's Mediatorial Kingdom, the reign of righteousness. Yes, after the destructive forces of this titanic struggle shall have spent themselves, "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," as Isaiah, in chapter 2, verse 4 (Isa. 2:4) of his prophecy declares. Mankind will have learned the utter futility of seeking to live apart from God and, in their extremity, will call upon him to save them. When, in such contrition and humility of heart, they do turn to him, they will find him waiting to be gracious. He will put his wondrous laws of truth and justice, of righteousness and love, in their minds. He will write them, not again on tables of stone, but in the softened tablets of

their hearts. He will be to them their God, and they shall be to him his people. No more will it be necessary for a few enlightened ones to instruct the others in regard to the gracious character and purposes of God, for all shall know him from the least to the greatest (Heb. 8:10, 11).

HOPE BEYOND THE GRAVE

Nor is this hope held out to those only who have not actually entered the tomb. No! -in order to give Adam and his entire family this favorable opportunity just described, there is to be an awakening of the dead, as we read: "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:15). This statement of the Apostle is in full harmony with the Master's own words: "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice [the voice of the Son of God] and shall come forth (John 5:28, 29). We thank God for the wideness of his mercy, like the wideness of the sea; we praise his name that he is no respecter of persons, that every member of Adam's race, condemned through Adam's disobedience, redeemed from that condemnation by the death of Jesus, shall have a full opportunity of coming to a knowledge of the truth, and of using that knowledge for his own recovery from sin, sickness, sorrow, pain, and death-for the ultimate attainment of human perfection and everlasting life in Paradise, the scriptural name for the restored earth (1 Tim. 2:4; Acts 3:21).

First, then, study the Bible. Study it in the spirit of prayer, with the thought in mind of becoming better acquainted with the character of our heavenly Father, and with his glorious plans and purposes; and study it with the intention of bringing your life into conformity therewith.

(Continued in next issue)

- P. L. Read

Watchman, What Hour of the Night?

"The prophets . . . searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto . . . which things angels desire to look into." - Isa. 21:11; 1 Pet. 1:10-12, A.R.V.

IT WAS the duty of the watchman in an ancient city to call the hours. The question heard by Isaiah suggests that the watchman had been silent. Perhaps the city was in fear of an enemy -- of an attack at dawn. The night was dark -- the stars, by which the time might be told, were hidden in the clouds. A citizen, roused from sleep by he knows not what, calls to the watchman in the street or on the wall, literally: "Watchman, what from off the night?" *"Watchman, how far gone is the night?" - Rotherham.*

The Scriptures picture the symbolic earth, the social order, as being in darkness, and most of mankind lying in a heavy sleep (Isa. 60:2; Isa. 29:9-12; et al.). But some individuals have been wakeful; and from the prophets and servants of God, as well as from Seir and other godless sources, has often come the ancient question: *"What time is it?"*

Thus the Psalmist, David, asked: "O Jehovah, how long shall the wicked, *how long* shall the wicked triumph?" Again he inquires, saying: "Our own signs have we not seen -- there is no longer a prophet -- neither is there one with us who knoweth how long! How long, O God, shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy revile thy name perpetually?" In the prophecy of Daniel the repeated inquiry is found concerning the symbolic time-measures given him: *"How long* shall be the vision?" "What shall be the issue of these things?" The disciples asked of the Lord: "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign ... ?" And after the resurrection: "Dost thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?"

The demons also, having a deep personal interest in the matter, demanded of Jesus: "Art thou come hither to torment [restrain] *us before the time?*" (Psa. 94:3; Psa. 74:9, 10; Isa. 21:11; Dan. 8:13; Dan. 12:8; Matt. 24:3; Acts 1:6; Matt. 8:29).

The interest today, among the wakeful, is no less intense. The "Worldly Wisemen" are anxiously seeking to penetrate the future; and many modern Bible students are searching the Scriptures, as did the holy men of old, to discover if it may be, "What time or what manner of time" the prophecies signify. The *Herald* is constantly receiving, from earnest and zealous brethren, manuscripts, charts, pamphlets, and books on various features of "the chronology." These usually "correct" one or two alleged mistakes of past writers and often contain helpful suggestions, but as these correspondents are not in collaboration, their conclusions are not in harmony. Not *only* so, but related Scriptures are often overlooked or ignored, which would modify or contradict their findings.

The Bible chronology, as it has been constructed by many generations of investigators throughout the Gospel Age, is not readily corrected in detail; if it is to be changed, it must be revised with full regard for interrelated prophetic time periods, and with familiarity with the vast and invaluable researches of previous chronologers. From time to time the *Herald* has sought to aid in clarifying the subject by a restatement of some of its underlying principles and requirements, and a review of the conclusions and unanswered questions left to us by the ablest of modern investigators in this field, and thus help those continuing prophetic research to harmonize their findings.

It is evident that the question before us is essentially identical with the one that St. Peter declares was in the minds of the prophets themselves--yes, even in the minds of angels (1 Pet. 1:10-12; Dan. 8:13), viz., What time-periods, or what manner (kind) of time-periods, does the Spirit signify, in the prophecies of Scripture which obviously indicate a fixed and definite period of suffering for God's

people, of both the Old and the New Dispensations, to be followed by an equally definite period of exaltation and glory in the "Age to come wherein dwelleth righteousness"?

St. Peter says it was revealed to the Prophets that they were not to understand the meaning of these prophecies, but that *this understanding was reserved for "us"*; and he exhorts us to "gird up the loins of your mind, and be sober, and [with the aid of these prophecies] hope completely [fully] for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ..." (1 Pet. 1:12, 13). Accordingly we honor those brethren who are giving thought and time, labor and their means, in the endeavor to solve the ancient mystery.

Those to *whom* the Apostle refers as "us" are the ones to whom he addresses his Epistle: ". . . the elect . . . according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (verses 1-3). We therefore ask, Have all these been fully aware of the time-significance of the prophecies; of the dates of the beginnings and endings of the periods; of "what time and what manner of time" was meant? The answer of course is No, all have not been so aware; it would therefore appear that some other feature of the prophecies was intended for *all* the Church -- the "us" class.

It may well be argued that, though veritably of this class, we may never know the exact lengths or dates of the prophetic periods; but we may know of a surety that these prophecies have their fulfillment in Christ, and if we are joined to him we may with equal assurance make application of their promises of blessings to ourselves: for "If we suffer [with him] we shall also reign with him"; and "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory" (2 Tim. 2:12; Col. 3:4). Certainly it is far more important for us to know that we may participate in the prophesied blessings than to know just when those blessings are to come.

It is apparent that partial knowledge and even misunderstanding of the time prophecies has been stimulating to Christian living in all periods of the Age. Because the meaning of these prophecies has been hidden and obscure, yet their promises so attractive and their terms so urgent, each zealous investigator has been prompted to apply them to his own times. Constant expectation of impending dissolution of the present evil order has contributed in an important measure to holy living by the believer in every stage of the Church, as Peter seems to imply further along in this very passage: "Wherefore ... set your hope completely on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ ... like as he is holy ... *be ye yourselves also holy.*" And the Apostle makes his thought still more clear in his second Epistle: "Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be *in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God ...?*" (1 Pet. 1:13-16; 2 Pet. 3: 11-13).

However, the earnest Bible student can never be satisfied with an incomplete or inaccurate understanding of Scripture. He cannot admit that the Bible statements of time-periods should be considered impossible of complete interpretation and understanding. He refuses to relinquish hope of an ultimate solution; hence he never ceases his efforts to solve the puzzles connected with these time features, and is ever on the lookout for hints from any source that may prove helpful in his quest.

Figures are exact; "seventy sevens" are 490, not 491, or 489; "seven times" (if we understand the numerical system correctly) are 2520 years, not 2520 plus 40, or some other figure. The time periods of prophecy must have a definite ending, marked by some definite event, or their significance and authority are greatly weakened. The fact that previous interpreters obviously have erred in their conclusions should not have a deterrent or discouraging effect, but rather a stimulating influence, on the "searchers" and "examiners" of the Scriptures. There is the gold of further truth yet to be discovered, if we are willing to "search for it as for hid treasure." Through the Prophet Habbakuk the assurance is given: "The vision is yet for the appointed time . though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay" beyond the "appointed time" (Prov. 2:1-5; Hab. 2:3).

Daniel, who asked for an understanding of the time prophecies given him, was told: "Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are shut up and sealed till the time of the end ... none of the wicked shall understand, but they that are wise shall understand" (Dan. 12:9, 10). This expression, "time of the end," clearly indicates *a period* of time. The Prophet employs quite another word to indicate a *point* of time. The latter is found in Dan. 2:8, 9, 16 (see A.R.V. and Rotherham); Dan. 4:36; Dan. 7:22.

Similarly, Daniel distinguishes between a terminating period and a complete end, although the Authorized Version does not, translating both original words as "end." A final end is indicated in Dan. 1:5, 15, 18; Dan. 4:29, 34; and Dan. 9:24 (a still different word).

Daniel was told that "the vision belongeth to the time of the end" (Dan. 8:17, A.R.V.). Strong defines the word "vision" as "a view, the act of seeing." Again, the Prophet was told to "seal the book to the time of the end." Before that time, "some of them that are wise" -- Rotherham's footnote says "the instructors," and refers to Dan. 8:33, "they who make the people wise" -- "shall fall, to refine them, and to purify and to make them white, even to the time of the end; because it is yet for the time appointed." The American Revised Version also has footnotes giving the meaning of "instructors" to "the wise of chapters 11 and 12. Perhaps this (Dan. 11:35, quoted above) has particular reference to the many sincere but premature and erroneous interpretations of "the vision" by "the teachers of the people." It is encouraging to believe that even our honest errors may "refine, purify and make us white," by humbling and warning us (Dan. 11:33, 35).

"The words are shut up and sealed till the time of the end. . . . None of the wicked shall understand; but they that are wise shall understand" (Dan. 12:9, 10). Whether this promise means that during the end-period the "wise" shall come to a complete understanding of all of the time-prophecies, or to the particular one or ones given through Daniel, or merely that the "wise" shall know in a general way that it is the time of the end, and that the prophecies are being, or are about to be, fulfilled, is for each sincere and honest examiner of the sacred records to conclude for himself. The writer holds the former view. He believes that it would be more to the glory of God and the vindication of his Word for some, at least, of his "little ones" to arrive at "an exact knowledge of the truth" in this respect as in others, during the due time -- the time-period of the end. Such an understanding would demonstrate not only God's foreknowledge, but his ability to forestall events in such a way as that, hidden until the "time-lock" is released, even poor human intelligence, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, may share the foreknowledge in all its exactness. "The path of the righteous is as the light of dawn, going on and brightening, unto meridian day" (Prov. 4:18, Rotherham).

As Bible students we therefore may say: "We know the solution of the mystery is there, hidden in his Word. We do not yet fully understand, but we shall understand in God's due time, or when we have worked hard enough on the problem to merit its unfolding to us. We will not be discouraged either by past mistakes and disappointments, or by the difficulties that lie before us. We will remember the intense interest and labors to understand on the part of the angels, of the prophets, and of our brethren of the Church who have preceded us; and calling to mind the promises of ultimate understanding given through Daniel, Habakkuk, and others of the Prophets and the Apostles, we will follow on in full expectation of eventually coming to "know even as we are known."

- H. E. Hollister

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 was approximately twelve hundred.

Our itinerary, which covered perhaps twenty-four hundred miles, brought us in touch with friends in the following places: Welling, Hoddesdon, Glasgow, Belfast, Londonderry, Fermanagh, Dublin, Aldersbrook, London, Aylesbury, Coventry, Bromley, Cardiff, Bexhill, Berkhamsted, Warrington, Rugby, and Forest Gate, 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. While some were able to refresh our memory with regard to incidents occurring in connection with our previous visits (in 1922, 1927, 1932, 1953, 1957, 1960, and 1962), 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 in recent years of Brothers John Dawson, Fred A. Essler, R. Robert Hollister, Alec L. Muir 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 everyday 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.

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 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. 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

The Question Box

James 1:25; Matt. 10:28; Matt. 24:28.

Question:

In James 1:25 we read of "the perfect law of liberty." The language here employed seems contradictory. On the one hand "law" is defined as a rule of action prescribed by authority. "Liberty," on the other hand, suggests freedom from restraint. What has "law" to do with "liberty?" Do they not mutually exclude each other?

Answer:

At first glance it would seem so. Closer study, however, discloses that while the terms are self-contradictory, the statement itself gives expression to a remarkable truth. Other instances of this paradoxical form of expression may be found in the New Testament. To mention but one, we quote 2 Cor. 6:9, 10: "As unknown and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

Here the Apostle likens himself to the son of a millionaire, not yet in possession of his future inheritance, but nevertheless able to draw on the infinite resources of his Father. From one point of view he had nothing, yet, since Jehovah himself was his portion, did not the Apostle truly possess all things? No doubt from one standpoint he was poor; yet who could appraise his value to the Church, and how rich he has made us by the lavish manner in which he spent and was himself spent in the service of the Master and in the service of us all.

So it is with this peculiar expression, "the perfect law of liberty." It is a paradox. Let us examine it. It can be best understood perhaps by means of an illustration. Here, let us say, is a boy to whom has been given an untrained dog. The dog is totally unacquainted with the boy. It is taken out into the fields when, without the least warning, it breaks loose from the boy and scampers away, paying no heed whatever to the boy's whistles and calls. Here we have an illustration of liberty without law.

Eventually the dog is recaptured and placed on the end of a chain. Thereafter, whenever the boy and the dog go out for a walk, the dog is always on the end of a chain. He is allowed no freedom. This illustrates law without liberty.

During this period of law without liberty, however, the boy is teaching the dog to love and respect him. No one is allowed to feed the dog except the boy. The boy speaks encouraging words to him when he is well-behaved; scolds him at other times. The day comes at last when they go out together to the same fields as they went on their first walk. The chain is removed, and again the dog scampers off. The boy whistles and what happens? The dog gladly heeds the call of his master and scampers back. The chain of steel is no longer there. Another one, however, has taken its place—an even stronger one. It is the cord of love and understanding woven during the training period. Here is an illustration of the law of liberty.

So long as the dog remained untrained, he was unfit for the law of liberty. Law without liberty, as illustrated in the chain, must be his only portion. From this homely illustration we believe it will

be apparent that the perfect law of liberty mentioned by the Apostle James is for the well disposed only; that is to say, it is applicable, at the present time, only to members of the new creation-the little flock. Others are still under the Mosaic Law, as servants, not fit for "the liberty wherewith Christ makes free" the sons, or else they are under the condemnation of the original law, the condemnation of death.

Before these, Jews and Gentiles alike, will be fit for the perfect law of liberty, they must be placed under the rule of a rod of iron, for a thousand years. During that time they will be shepherded by Christ and his Church, who will administer the laws of the Kingdom with justice tempered with mercy.

Not until the close of the Millennial Age, when the willful evildoers shall have been cut off in the Second Death, will the race, proved perfect and fully in accord with the divine standard, be put under the perfect law of liberty-love and its golden rule.

Question:

Will you please explain Mathew 10:28, where we read:

"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

If we are a soul and do not possess a soul, how are we to understand the use of "body" and "soul" in this Scripture?

Answer:

For a proper understanding of this text we must first ascertain the Bible answer to the question: "What is man?"

There are two general views on this subject which, while each contains elements of truth, are, on the whole, misleading. One is the so-called orthodox view; the other, the so-called scientific view. Neither represents the Bible viewpoint, and those who hold either are hereby prevented from securing the benefit which the Bible teaching would have on their hearts and lives.

The position of orthodox theology, briefly stated, is that man is, a composite being of three parts-body, spirit, and soul. The body, it is believed, is born after the usual manner of animal birth, except that at the time of birth God interposes and, in some inscrutable manner, implants in the body a -spirit and a soul which, being parts of God himself, are indestructible, and therefore can never die. These two parts, spirit and soul, orthodoxy is unable to separate and distinguish, and hence uses the terms interchangeably.

Scientists answer the question, "What is man?" by stating that man is an animal of the highest type yet developed. They offer no suggestion as to a future life for any individual, but, believing they can trace an evolutionary development of mankind in past ages, are disposed to the view that the race may by natural processes (and apart from the power and purpose of a personal God) yet be developed into a superior condition to that of the present.

The Bible answer to the question recognizes man as composed of two elements, body and spirit. By body is meant the physical organism; by spirit, the animating power -- the breath of life. The union of these two elements produces the man himself, the sentient being-the soul. As we read in

Gen. 2:7: "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

It is the teaching of the Bible that when the spirit is separated from the body, the man (that is to say, the sentient being, the soul) ceases to exist. To quote from James 2:26: "The body without [or apart from] the spirit is dead." According to the Bible, any hope of a future life for an individual man who has died must lie in the power and purpose of God. The Gospel undertakes to prove that God has both the power and the purpose to accomplish a resurrection for all, and that everlasting life will be offered to all, on certain conditions, either in this Age or in the Age to come.

The Greek word twice rendered "soul" in our text is *psuche*. It is frequently translated "life" and indeed is so translated a little later in this same discourse of our Lord. "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (verse 39). This variation in translation has served to confuse, creating the impression that "life" is one thing and "soul" another, and that a man might lose his life without losing his soul. Such confusion is particularly noticeable in Mark 8:35-37: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" In this passage the word *psuche* is twice translated "life" and twice "soul." Had the word been uniformly translated the truth would not have been obscured.

In the light of the foregoing discussion let us return to Matthew 10:28. What does our Lord mean when he says: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul?" Does he mean that when the body is killed there is a mysterious, invisible something called a soul, which men are not able to kill, and which, therefore, escapes death at their hands and continues to live on -- apart from the body? Such is the orthodox view, which, as we have indicated, we cannot share. But even those who hold it should be on guard against embracing the further error of supposing that such an escaped soul is possessed of the quality of immortality -- deathlessness. The closing words of this very verse make that plain. They speak of one (God himself) who has the power to destroy both soul and body.

But, if the orthodox view be wrong, what is the proper one? I answer: Our Lord well knew that when men killed the body, they then and there destroyed also the present life, the soul, the sentient being. He was not denying this obvious fact. The disciples, however, had hope of a future life - a life beyond the power of the killer to harm, much less to destroy. This hope of life came to them through the Gospel-came as the result of the redemption provided by God himself, through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus. This hope of a future life was shortly to be confirmed to them by our Lord's resurrection from the dead. Because he lived they would have grounds for believing that they, too, would live.

The present life they would lose, whether men killed their body or not -- they would lose it in old age if not sooner. But their future life, their prospect for eternity-this lay in the power of God. He it is, then, and not men, whom they should fear.

Benjamin Wilson, in the *Emphatic Diaglott* translation, by using the word "life" and by supplying the word "future" has given us what we cannot but believe is the true meaning of our Lord's words. We close this discussion by quoting his translation, which reads as follows:

"Be not afraid of those who kill the body, but cannot destroy the (future) life; but rather fear him who can utterly destroy both life and body in Gehenna."

Question:

Please explain Matthew 24:28, which reads: "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

Answer:

I shall never forget, at the age of seventeen, asking this selfsame question of a dear sister then in her eighties. Nor shall I ever forget her reply. While to most of my queries she had a ready response, this one puzzled her. She did not permit this lack of knowledge, however, to disturb her poise. With quiet dignity, humbly, and with her customary charm and serenity, she replied simply: "My boy, I really do not know what that scripture means."

Sixty years have rolled away since then. She, I doubt not, has long known the answer to this puzzling passage. For myself, I am not too certain. Perhaps I have it also. That, however, must be for the reader to decide.

Before inquiring as to the meaning of the expression, let us first secure a better translation.

To begin with, the first word of the verse, the particle "for" should be eliminated. It *has* been eliminated in the *Revised Standard Version*, the *Diaglott* and other more accurate translations. Scholars tell us that an earlier translator foisted this word "for" into the text because he imagined, erroneously, that the statement in verse 28 was intended to corroborate the statement in verse 27, where our Lord had likened his second advent to lightning emerging from the east and shining to the west.

Again, the word translated "eagles" includes all birds of rapine, and since *eagles do not feed on carrion*, the word vultures should be used here. A preferred translation is given by *Moflatt*: "Wherever the carcass lies, there will the vultures gather."

Now that we have this preferred translation before us, let us examine it. No less than five possible interpretations have come to my attention.

One interpretation is that the Jewish nation is represented by the carcass, while the eagles are the Roman armies, whose ensign is the eagle. Many able scholars have adopted this view, among them being Lightfoot, John Wesley, and Adam Clark. But this interpretation proceeds on the assumption that verse 27 refers to our Lord's return to destroy Jerusalem through the agency of the Romans in A.D. 70 -an assumption which is not confirmed by historical facts, and which introduces confusion into the interpretation of the rest of the chapter.

A second interpretation, one adopted by Chrysostom and others of the early Christian Fathers, is that the carcass represents Christ himself, and the eagles represent the members of the Church, gathering to him by faith throughout the Gospel Age.

A third interpretation is somewhat similar to the second one, except that the gathering together of the eagles is understood to mean the meeting with the Lord in the air, mentioned in 1 Thess. 4:17.

A fourth interpretation is the one put forth by Brother Russell. His view was approximately the same as that held by Chrysostom, except that he supplemented the thought (that the carcass represented Christ) by the additional thought that it also represented the truth concerning Christ

and especially the food of "present truth," provided by our Lord during the period of his second presence.

In support of this view, Brother Russell pointed out that, in the parallel passage in Luke (Luke 17:37), these words of our Lord are in reply to a question put to him by the disciples, namely, "Where, Lord? This question Brother Russell understood as meaning: "Where will these [the two on the bed in Luke 17:34 and the two grinding at the mill in verse Luke 17:35] -- where will these be taken?" - S.S., *Vol. IV*, page D610.

However, their question, "Where, Lord?", may be understood in another way, in line with a further interpretation, which appeals to me as being, probably, the true one. In this, the fifth interpretation noted, the carcass represents *corruption*, and the vultures *judgment*. Let us consider this interpretation, and note how well it fits the context.

Our Lord had just been pointing out a coming time of *judgment*. It would, he had said, be a time of trouble, such as had not been previously in mankind's history. Elaborating his theme, he had reminded them that, except for the few who entered the ark with Noah, the flood had destroyed, not merely a few, but *all* of them. Again, he had observed that when Lot fled from Sodom *all others were destroyed*; even Lot's wife had perished when she looked back. And he had likened these events to the conditions which would obtain during the period of his second advent (Matt. 24:21, 37-39; Luke 17:28-30). It was to all of this that the disciples had responded: "Where, Lord?" (Where will these judgments take place?)

Such a question indicated that, as yet, they understood very little of the ways of God. In their imperfect, immature point of view, God, being almighty, could do anything he chose. They failed to realize that there are some things which even God cannot do. He cannot violate his own principles. He cannot deny himself (2 Tim. 2:13). This they had yet to learn. In their minds, Christ, did he but choose, could restore the kingdom to Israel "at this time" (Acts 1:6), or five hundred years hence, or five thousand. These judgments of which he had just been forwarning them, could take place in Jerusalem, if God so chose, or in Japan. They had yet to learn that God never has and never will act arbitrarily. *He cannot do so.*

To their question, "Where, Lord?" -- where shall these judgments take place? our Lord replied *in a way they would understand*. He replied with a well known Oriental proverb, based on a passage in the Book of Job (Job 39:30). "Where the slain are, *there is she* (the eagle, or vulture - Luke 17:27). "Wheresoever the carcass is, *there will* the vultures be gathered together." (Wheresoever corruption abounds, *there* God's judgments will be sent, to clean up the putrid mess.)

This has been the unvarying procedure on the part of Almighty God throughout the centuries. It is plainly to be seen in the case of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, *and will never be more true than in the judgment day of the nations in the end of the Gospel Age.*

And when will that be? And where? I reply: To my understanding it has been in process for years, and will continue to its completion. It is not localized to one or a few nations, but includes, or yet will include, all nations. Its purpose is benevolent, as may be noted in the following lines from an unknown poet:

The wrath of God is Love's severity
In curing sin -- the zeal of righteousness
In overcoming wrong -- the remedy
Of Justice for the world's redress.

The wrath of God is punishment for sin,
In measure unto all transgression due,
Discriminating well and just between
Presumptuous sins and sins of lighter hue.

The wrath of God inflicts no needless pain
Merely vindictive, or himself to please;
But aims the ends of mercy to attain,
Uproot the evil and the good increase.

The wrath of God is a consuming fire,
That burns while there is evil to destroy
Or good to purify; nor can expire
Till all things are relieved from sin's alloy.

The wrath of God is Love's parental rod,
The disobedient to chastise, subdue,
And bend submissive to the will of God,
That Love may reign when all things are made new.

The wrath of God shall never strike in vain,
Nor cease to strike till sin shall be no more;
Till God his gracious purpose shall attain,
And earth to righteousness and peace restore.

What to do? Let the Prophet answer: "Seek righteousness, seek meekness: it *may be* ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger" (Zeph. 2:3).

- P. L. Read

The Year Before Us

Standing at the portal of the opening year,
Words of comfort meet us, hushing every fear;
Spoken through the silence by our Father's voice,
Tender, strong and faithful, making us rejoice.
Onward, then, and fear not, children of the day;
For His Word shall never, never pass away.

"I, the Lord, am with thee, be thou not afraid;
I will help and strengthen, be thou not dismayed.
Yea, I will uphold thee with Mine own right hand;
Thou art called and chosen in my sight to stand."
Onward, then, and fear not, children of the day;
For Word shall never, never pass away.

For the year before us, oh, what rich supplies!
For the poor and needy, living streams shall rise;
For the sad and mournful, shall His grace abound;
For the faint and feeble, perfect strength be found.
Onward, then, and fear not, children of the day;
For His Word shall never, never pass away.

He will never fail us, He will not forsake;
His eternal covenant He will never break;
Resting on His promise, what have we to fear?
God is all-sufficient for the coming year.
Onward, then, and fear not, children of the day;
For His Word shall never, never pass away.

- Frances R. Havergal

Recently Deceased

Katherine Ashby, Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Emmett Barton, Denton, Texas
Peter Berlinski, Milwaukee, Wis.
Anna Kaminsky, Edwardsburg, Mich.
Edward Lang, Chicago, Ill.
Olin Moyle, Racine, Wis.
Laurine Panucci, Van Nuys, Cal.
Ira D. Watts, Baltimore, Md.
Minnette Wier, River Forest, Ill.