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SEMI-MONTHLY.
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LETTERS FOR THE EDITOR SHOULD BE SENT TO ALLEGHENY, PA., U.S.A.
SUBSCRIPTIONS AND BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS

--ADDRESS TO--

WATCH TOWER BIBLE & TRACT SOCIETY,
"BIBLE HOUSE," 610, 612, 614 ARCH ST., ALLEGHENY, PA., U.S.A.

--OR TO--

BRITISH BRANCH, 131 GIPSY LANE, FOREST GATE, LONDON E. ENGLAND.

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TERMS TO THE LORD'S POOR, AS FOLLOWS:--

Those of the interested who, by reason of old age, or other infirmity
or adversity, are unable to pay for the TOWER, will be supplied FREE, if
they send a Postal Card each December, stating their case and requesting
the paper. We are not only willing, but anxious, that all such be on our
list continually.

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ENTERED AS SECOND CLASS MAIL MATTER AT ALLEGHENY, PA., POST OFFICE.

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ZION'S GLAD SONGS, 5 CENTS--POST-PAID.

We have arranged for a new edition of Zion's Glad Songs,
and propose to supply them at 5 cents per copy--post paid.

HAVE YOU RESPONDED FOR 1902?

We revise our memoranda for "Pilgrim" service yearly, now, as we find that a year is apt to make many changes in conditions. Do not blame us if you are passed by, if your Secretary has made no request for Pilgrim Visits.

We find that some of the friends have refrained from requesting "Pilgrim" visits because they supposed they would be expected to contribute for his railway fare and also for his support. This is a mistake: the services of the preaching "Pilgrims" laboring under the auspices of the WATCH TOWER BIBLE & TRACT SOCIETY are absolutely without charge;--nor do they take up any collections. The Society pays their railway and all other expenses out of its funds, which are all voluntary donations, from such as are able and anxious to serve thus.

All we ask of the friends visited is that they provide a parlor, hall, school-house or church building for the meetings and that they board and lodge the "Pilgrim" during the two or three days of his visit. We attend to all else.

RENEW REQUESTS FOR PILGRIM-SERVICE, 1902.

The Pilgrim routes are made out months ahead; so it is too late to write us, as some do, when they learn from last page that a Pilgrim is coming to their vicinity. If you desire visits write us a Postal Card (or on a card of that size) answering the following questions: (a) Have you regular meetings now? (b) How many usually attend? (c) Who are the chosen leaders of the class? (d) Did the class vote its desire for Pilgrim visits? (e) Are you able and willing to secure a suitable room for private meetings? (f) Could you arrange also for one public meeting? and what number could probably be gathered? (g) Where are your meetings held and at what hours?

You can answer briefly, thus: (a) Yes. (b) 14. (c) John Smith and Amos Brown. (d) Yes. (e) Yes. (f) Yes: 100 to 300. (g) Bro. Jones' No. 614 First street, at 3 p.m. every Sunday.

When you see a notice of a "Pilgrim Visit" near you and do not know the meeting address, enquire of us by Postal card immediately. Those arranging for "Pilgrim meetings" will please notify us early respecting their arrangements. If off the railroad, name nearest station and further conveyance.

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VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER.

A GLOOMY OUTLOOK.

President Eliot, of Harvard University, takes a rather gloomy view of the future outlook. He says that "churches, courts and legislatures command less respect and have less influence now than thirty

years ago." He thinks the church has degenerated into poetic generalities or to ritualistic pomp. He notes in the judiciary a decline in personal merit and in public estimation. "Legislative bodies," says the president of Harvard, "have fallen into popular contempt." But, gloomy as all this is, he does not despair of his country. While the years have been laying successive layers of black paint on the religious bodies, on the judges of our courts, and on the lawmakers, there is still one ray of light shining through the gloom. For meanwhile, the school has become more powerful, "and education is the one agency for promoting intelligence and righteousness which has gained strength in the last half century."

"CHURCH PERIL--GROUND BEING LOST."

Dr. George C. Lorimer, the noted Boston preacher, now pastor of the Madison Avenue Baptist Church, says the Protestant Church is in peril; that the dangers are from within, not without; that the church is losing hold on intelligent thought. In his Sunday sermon he said:

"Every now and then certain things are said which betray an uneasy feeling as to the future stability and supremacy of Protestantism.

"But whatever may be said of the gloomy outlook, it is not due, as many suppose, to the hostility of Romanism. The Papacy has its own troubles.

"The present perils of our faith are not primarily from without. They are from within, and they are similar to those which endangered the standing and usefulness of the Galatian Church.

"Romanism is dogmatic. She has come to the front as the champion of the Bible against the destructive critics, and as the defender of the sacred mysteries against the naturalism of the rationalists, while we have fallen into the cheap and idle fashion of decrying doctrine; and we fail to see that as we drift from the theologia sacra we are losing our hold on intelligent thought.

"An additional peril springs from the present spirit of Protestantism. The peril is that genuine Christians may desire to make their churches centres of social influence rather than sources of regenerating power. Protestantism today suffers from worldliness.

"Diminished congregations and depleted treasuries are other danger signs."--N.Y. Journal.

WATER AGAIN FLOWS IN THE POOL OF SILOAM.

"For over ten years the Pool of Siloam has been

only a name. Visitors to Palestine who have seen this historic spot of late years have found that its healing waters have vanished. Just recently the waters of Siloam have been made to flow once again, and there has been great rejoicing in the Holy Land. It appears that Jerusalem has been especially short of water of late, and it occurred to some of the inhabitants of Siloam to try to find out whether the spring which used to supply the pool was really dry. Tons of accumulated rubbish were cleared away, and after about a month's work the spring was found. The excavators discovered behind some fallen rocks an old aqueduct running into the valley of the Chadron, and into this aqueduct the beautiful, cool, clear water had run and been wasting for years."

ZIONISM'S PROSPECTS AS SEEN BY THE N.Y. TRIBUNE.

"Has the Zionist movement any prospect of attaining its end?

"Very little. It looks as though the scornful indifference of the intellectual and wealthy among the Jews were sufficient to promptly dissipate their co-religionists' dream of returning to the promised land. The latter, to be sure, have in their favor the greater number and faith, but against these are arrayed the rationalists, for whom the true Messiah is

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the French Revolution that brought them emancipation; the prudence of the rabbis, proclaiming that henceforth the Jews have no other country but that of their birth (declaration of the grand rabbis of France, England, Austria, Hungary, at the Congress of Basle, 1897); the money dealers, without whom nothing can be done, and who are not willing to exchange their banks, their industries, their palaces, for the barren and poor soil of Palestine; the politicians, for whom the integrity of the Ottoman Empire has become a dogma, and who would not permit a Jewish state to rise in the midst of the Sultan's Asiatic dominions. All these powers of the modern world, rationalism, wealth, politics, are barring the way of those simple minded, pious souls who persist in striving for a redemption of Israel, who dream of a temple other than the Exchange and who long for the promised land with all the ardor of the Jews of the Babylonian captivity."

* * *

Just so! Worldly wisdom fails to discern some matters even while they are transpiring. The Watch

Tower and Dawns pointed out the present Zionist movement from God's Word long before its founders thought of it. Ever since 1878, when Israel's "double" of chastisement expired, the land has been preparing for the people and the people for the land. In God's due time, and that soon, they will come together. Meantime persecutions in various lands are the prods, the "staff" of their Shepherd, to awaken them and direct their hearts toward the promises of which they are heirs.--Rom. 11:26-29.

ZIONISM FROM A LITERARY JEW'S STANDPOINT.

To the Editor N.Y. Journal:

I am not a prophet, but it certainly seems to me that without the Zionistic movement, and without persecution from without, isolated Jewish communities have no sufficient seeds of permanence in a world whose civilization is already built up on Old Testament lines. Unfortunately, persecution is still unending, especially in Russia and Roumania, and fortunately Zionism is making great strides. Nineteen hundred and one will be memorable as the year in which the ruler of Palestine--the Sultan of Turkey --received Dr. Herzl, and will end characteristically with the fifth Zionistic congress. Every congress shows an augmentation in enthusiasm and in the prospects of what seemed five years ago to be the mad vision of a dreamer of the Ghetto. In striking the racial chord Dr. Herzl has struck the chord which rings truest, and there is no doubt the brotherhood of Israel contains the elements of a political force. When even America is beginning to exclude Jewish emigrants, there will be no place left for the sole of their foot but Palestine, and thus forces external and internal are beginning to coincide and work together for good--the evil force of persecution, the righteous force of Zionism. Faithfully yours,--I. ZANGWILL.

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GOD'S MESSAGE ON PEACE

Psa. 34:14. "Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it."

Heb. 12:14. "Follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord."

Rom. 14:17. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

Rom. 14:19. "Follow after the things which make for peace and things wherewith one may edify another."

Rom. 12:18. "Live peaceably with all men."

I Cor. 14:33. "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace."

I Cor. 7:15. "God has called us to peace."

I Tim. 2:2. "Lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

Jas. 3:17. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure then peaceable."

Isa. 26:3. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee."

Prov. 16:7. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

I Thes. 5:13. "Be at peace among yourselves."

2 Cor. 13:11. "Be of one mind, live in peace and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

Mark 9:50. "Have peace one with another."

Job 22:21. "Acquaint now thyself with God and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee."

Jas. 3:18. "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

2 Tim. 2:22. "Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

Col. 3:15. "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body."

Eph. 4:3. "Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Rom. 10:15. "Preach the gospel of peace."

Rom. 8:6. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Zech. 8:19. "Love the truth and peace."

Prov. 12:20. "Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counsellors of peace is joy."

Psa. 119:165. "Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them."

Psa. 37:37. "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."

Psa. 37:11. "The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in abundance of peace."

2 Peter 3:13,14. "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless."

Rom. 14:18. "He that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men."

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BY ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON (ABOUT A.D., 1675).

THIS IS THE END of the ministry, that you may be brought unto Christ, that you may be led to the sweet pastures and pleasant streams of the gospel; that you may be spiritually fed, and may grow in that heavenly life, which is here begun in all those in whom it shall hereafter be perfected.

As the milk that infants draw from the breast, is most connatural food to them, being of that same substance that nourished them in the womb: so when they are brought forth, that food follows them as it were for their supply in that way that is provided in nature for it; by certain veins it ascends into the breasts, and is there fitted for them, and they are by nature directed to find it there. Thus as a Christian begins to live by the power of the Word, he is by the nature of that spiritual life directed to that same Word as his nourishment.

Whereas natural men cannot love spiritual things for themselves, desire not the Word for its own sweetness, but would have it sauced with such conceits as possibly spoil the simplicity of it; or at the best love to hear it for the wit, and learning, which, without any wrongful mixture of it, they find in one delivering it more than another. But the natural and genuine appetite of the children of God, is to the Word, for itself, and only as milk, "sincere milk;" and where they find it so, from whomsoever, or in what way soever delivered unto them, they feed upon it with delight.

Desire the Word, not that you may only hear it; that is to fall very far short of its true end; yea, it is to take the beginning of the work for the end of it. The ear is indeed the mouth of the mind, by which it receives the Word (as Elihu compares it, Job 34:3), but meat that goes no further than the mouth (you know) cannot nourish. Neither ought this desire of the Word to be only to satisfy a custom; it were an exceeding folly to make so superficial a thing the end of so serious a work.

Again, to hear it only to stop the mouth of conscience, that it may not clamor more for the gross impiety of contemning it; this is to hear it not out of desire, but out of fear. To desire it only for some present pleasure and delight that a man may find in it, is not the due use and end of it; that there is delight in it, may help commend it to those that find it so, and so be a means to advance the end; but the end it is not.

To seek no more but a present delight that vanisheth with the sound of the words, that die in the air, is not to desire the Word as meat, but as music, as God tells the prophet Ezekiel of his people. "And

lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument; for they hear thy words, and they do them not."

To desire the Word for the increase of knowledge, although this is necessary and commendable, and being rightly qualified, is a part of spiritual accretion, yet take it as going no further, it is not the true end of the Word. Nor is the venting of that knowledge in speech and frequent discourse of the Word and the divine truths that are in it; which, where it is governed with Christian prudence, is not to be despised, but commended: yet certainly the highest knowledge, and the most frequent and skilful speaking of the Word, severed from the growth here mentioned, misses the true end of the word. If any one's head or tongue should grow apace, and all the rest stay at a stand, it would certainly make him a monster; and they are no other, that are knowing and discoursing Christians, and grow daily in that, but not at all in holiness of heart and life, which is the proper growth of the children of God.

And as we ought in preaching, so you in hearing, to propound this end to yourselves, that you may be spiritually refreshed, and walk in the strength of that divine nourishment. Is this your purpose when you come hither? Inquire of your own hearts, and see what you seek, and what you find, in the public ordinances of God's house. Certainly the most do not so much as think on the due intendment of them, aim at no end, and therefore can attain none; seek nothing; but sit out their hour, asleep or awake, as it may happen, or, possibly, some seek to be delighted for the time, as the Lord tells the prophet, "to hear as it were a pleasant song;" if the gifts and strain of the speaker be anything pleasing.

Or, it may be, they want to gain some new notions, to add somewhat to their stock of knowledge, either that they may be enabled for discourse, or, simply, that they may know. Some, it may be, go a little further: they like to be stirred and moved for the time, and to have some touch of good affection kindled in them; but this lasts but for a while, till their other thoughts and affairs get in, and smother and quench it; and they are not careful to blow it up and improve it. How many, when they have been a little affected with the Word, go out and fall into other discourses and thoughts, and either take in their affairs secretly, as it were, under their cloak, and their hearts keep a conference with them; or if they forbear this, yet, as soon as they go out, plunge themselves over head and ears in the world, and lose all which might have any way advantaged their spiritual condition. It may be, one will say, "It was a good sermon." Is that to the purpose? But what think you it hath for your praise or dispraise? Instead of saying

"Oh! how well was that spoken," you should say, "Oh! how hard is repentance! how sweet a thing is faith! how excellent the love of Jesus Christ!" That were your best and most real commendation of the sermon, with true benefit to yourselves.

How sounds it to many of us at least, but as a well contrived story, whose use is to amuse us, and possibly delight us a little, and there is an end?--and indeed no end, for this turns the most serious and most glorious of all messages into an empty sound. If we keep awake, and give it a hearing, it is much; but for anything further, how few deeply beforehand consider, 'I have a dead heart; therefore will I go unto the Word of life, that it may be quickened; it is frozen, I will go and lay it before the warm beams of that sun that shines in the gospel: my corruptions are mighty and strong, and grace, if there be any in my heart, is exceeding weak: but there is in the gospel a power to weaken and kill sin, and to strengthen grace:

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and this being the intent of my wise God in appointing it, it shall be my desire and purpose in resorting to it, to find it to me according to his gracious intendment; to have faith in my Christ, the fountain of my life, more strengthened, and made more active in drawing from him; to have my heart more refined and spiritualized, and to have the sluice of repentance opened, and my affections to divine things enlarged; more hatred of sin, and more love of God and Communion with him.

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PERSECUTION RIGHTLY RECEIVED.

--ACTS 5:33-42--FEB. 16.--

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven."--Matt. 5:10.

WE SAW, in a previous lesson, Peter and John before the Sanhedrin, and the subsequent growth of the Church in numbers and in the graces of the holy spirit, including joy and peace with God and with each other and with fellow-men. The Lord's blessing upon the apostles, through the gifts of the holy spirit, enabled them to heal the sick, and at the same time to declare that the work was done by the power of Jesus, whom the rulers had crucified; but whom God had raised from the dead, and who was

now in heavenly glory, a prince, a Savior, a glorified High Priest, ready and willing to grant forgiveness of sins and the blessing of the holy spirit to those who would accept.

For a time the chief priests and their associates in religious power, ignored the new movement and the fact that it reflected against them; but by and by they were aroused, and used the power at their hand for the arrest of the apostles; at the command of the chief ones the latter were put into prison. The account says they had "indignation"--margin, "envy." Thus the truth, in whatever way presented, has either a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death, according to the heart-conditions of those coming under its influence. In the present case the simplicity of the apostles, their earnestness in presenting their message, their power and kindness in respect to the healing of disease and casting out of devils, and their evident sincerity, had a right influence upon all "Israelites indeed;" but the formal, perfunctory Israelites, in favored positions of honor and affluence, were provoked to hatred and envy; envy because of a power over the people which they could not exercise; hatred, because of a feeling that these teachings were assailing and weakening their influence, and tending to break down the religious system which they represented.

So, too, we see matters to-day in nominal spiritual Israel. The spirit of sectarianism is jealous and envious, and resents and opposes whatever is not in accord with it;--fearful of its own fall,--realizing continually the weakness of its own position. On the contrary, now as ever, the truth, presented in simplicity and under the guidance of the holy spirit, will appeal to all who are in a right attitude of heart, all Israelites indeed, all whose eyes of understanding are open to see the inconsistencies of sectarianism and formalism. Sectarian leaders in our day have not the power to imprison those toward whom they feel enmity; nevertheless, having the same spirit as their prototypes, they manifest it to the extent of their ability. For instance; during the "Volunteer" service in Allegheny --in which brethren and sisters quietly and pleasantly tendered tracts and booklets free to Christian people on Sunday--some of the modern Pharisees and Sadducees were envious, and manifested their envy as nearly as possible after the manner described in our lesson. Some of the preachers commanded their congregations not to take the pamphlets, and heaped abuse and scandalous epithets upon God's faithful children, whose only object in the matter was to serve his cause, and to feed his flock. A committee of preachers waited upon the city officials and endeavored to have their cooperation--to secure the arrest and imprisonment of the brethren and sisters unless they would cease to preach this "gospel of the Kingdom," and let them alone to continue their blinding and deceiving

of the Lord's flock. They perceive that the truth is against them; against their positions; against their false theologies. They perceive that the truth has Scriptural support, which they cannot answer; and they fear lest it should "turn the world upside down," and that, in the melee, they would lose some of their dignity, honor of men and good salaries. As one of them declared, "My bread is not buttered on that side!"

The city officials, desirous of being on good terms with influential citizens, called at our office, rehearsed the facts, and notified us to discontinue the work. We replied that we are living in the United States, and not in Russia; and that there is no law here yet, against giving men booklets, any more than against giving them bank-bills, if they desire to take them, and if the procedure is conducted in a quiet, orderly manner. We assured them that if there were any breaches of the peace they would not come from the distributors, and explained further that those who engaged in this Volunteer service were as truly preaching the gospel by the printed page as were those who taught orally inside the church buildings; and further, that the real objection was, that our friends were circulating the true gospel, "good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people," while those inside the churches were deceiving their confiding flocks, misrepresenting God's character and plan, and withal reaping goodly rewards for their evil services;--whereas our friends, the Volunteers, were preaching the true gospel without money and without price;--seeking to educate the people in a knowledge of God and of his plan, as revealed in the Scriptures. The civil authorities readily saw the justice of our position, and there was no interference. Is not this a case of the blind seeing better than those who boast of having escaped from blindness?

The Lord's power was wonderfully manifested in the early days, not only in the healing of the sick, but afterwards in the deliverance of the apostles from imprisonment. The angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them forth; instructing them to proceed in the proclamation of the truth as before. The apostles and early Church at this time almost

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walked by sight; for, under such conditions, faith would be very secondary. However, we see that the object of this was the establishment of the Church upon broad, sure foundations. Subsequently the miraculous features were withdrawn, and are still withdrawn: frequently the Lord's people have been imprisoned and otherwise mistreated throughout the age, without any special physical deliverance,--even as the miraculous gift of healing also passed away. We walk by faith, not by sight; we can see the spiritual healings and casting out of evil spirits progress,

but are not granted physical demonstrations; and if imprisoned or otherwise despitely used, our consolations must be those of the heart, grasped by the arms of our faith.

The next morning, on the assembling of the Sanhedrin (also termed the Senate), when it was found that the apostles were not in the prison, but boldly teaching as before in the Temple, the chief priests found matters more complicated; and fearing the influence of such miracles upon the minds of the people, they caused the next arrest of the apostles to be made with great leniency, bringing them before the Sanhedrin. Thus another opportunity was afforded God's servants to testify, and to the chief priests and rulers to hear a strictly gospel sermon; and the speaker failed not to impress the same points as on previous occasions. What an opportunity this would have been for honest men, Israelites indeed! What a blessing it might have brought them! But being in an evil condition of heart they were merely angered, embittered, "cut to the heart."

Their words betray the source of their fear, when they said to the apostles. We have already forbidden you to teach the people, but instead of obeying us you have "filled Jerusalem with your doctrines" (teachings), and you evidently intend to bring upon us the

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ill-will of those who receive your teachings, by charging us with the blood of this Jesus. They feared not only for the safety of their sectarian systems, but they had a personal fear as well. And so we believe it is with the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees of to-day; they feel not only a necessity for supporting their various denominational structures, but, additionally, they realize that their personal standing is at stake. In proportion as what we present as the truth is accepted by the people, the ministers of the nominal churches are seen to be false teachers, false prophets, deceivers, who ignorantly or wilfully have woefully misrepresented the divine character and plan.

However, if the chief priests, etc., had only understood matters better they would not have been so alarmed. They would have realized that the apostles and their teachings would influence only a comparatively small number;--that the large majority of Israelites were such only in name; drawing nigh to God in outward forms and lip service, but far from him in heart. The same is true to-day. The preachers of Babylon need have little fear that the true gospel will affect the majority of their hearers in the least. On the contrary, now, as at the first advent, only such as "have an ear to hear" will hear, can hear: the remainder will continue under the leading of their blind guides, until, by and by, both shall fall into the ditch of general doubt

and unbelief here, as their prototypes did in the trouble which closed the Jewish age. Subsequent events proved that, altho' the apostles filled Jerusalem with their doctrine (teachings), a comparatively small number were ready and able and willing to receive the good messages, as the Apostle and the Prophet declare. --Isa. 10:22; Rom. 9:27.

Gamaliel was a great teacher amongst the Jews. It will be remembered that the Apostle Paul, as Saul of Tarsus, was one of his pupils. Gamaliel was a member of the Sanhedrin, and present on the occasion of this trial, and his wise counsel turned aside the murderous intentions of the chief priests toward the apostles. His wise and moderate language draws our esteem, and it swayed fully those who heard him say,-- "Refrain from these men and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men it will come to nought; but if it be of God ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God." We must esteem these words as merely worldly wisdom, and their author not as an Israelite indeed, but simply prudent and, possibly, a just man. So to-day, we find men in the councils of the nominal church and in the civil councils who are broad-minded, wise and liberally disposed. This does not mean, however, that these, any more than Gamaliel, are Israelites, indeed. They are noble-minded, and should have our respect accordingly; but we are not to be surprised if we find that they do not accept the truth, and that they are not of the "little flock." We are to remember, on the contrary, the inspired word--that not many great or wise or mighty hath God chosen, but "chiefly the poor of this world, rich in faith, to be heirs of the Kingdom." (I Cor. 1:26-29; Jas. 2:5.) We would like to press this point, because we have found at times that some of the Lord's people who have received the truth themselves are more or less stumbled by the fact that they see good, honorable, noble people who seem to have no ear to hear the truth, and no heart to accept discipleship amongst the Lord's people under the terms of his discipleship--full consecration, even unto death. The number of wise, learned people who are willing to become fools, in the estimation of men, for Christ's sake, is exceedingly small now, as ever.

The Sanhedrin warned the apostles to preach no more in this name,--the name of Jesus--and sentenced them to be whipped. Thus they would discredit the ministers of the new teaching in the eyes of the many, for then, as now, the majority of people were disposed to look to their leaders, and to accept their judgment as superior. It is well indeed that wise, true leaders should be appreciated and acknowledged and followed; but it is a lesson that all need to learn, that the Lord is the real leader and commander of all those who claim to be his people; and that while looking to leaders of ability for guidance and for help, all of the

Lord's people need to look beyond the leader also to the Lord; and to have their senses exercised in respect to the righteousness, the justice, the truthfulness, of the advice and example of their leaders.

REJOICING IN TRIBULATION.

As the apostles departed, at liberty, altho' sore from the thirteen strokes of a three-tailed whip ("forty stripes save one") they doubtless remembered our

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Lord's words, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake." So far from being cast down, their experience, because rightly received, made them stronger in the Lord. They went again before the people to teach, but in no wrong attitude. They did not threaten the scribes and Pharisees, reviling them as corrupt, etc., nor did they bemoan their fate, thinking it strange that the Lord should permit these fiery trials to come upon them. No; they were true soldiers of the cross; they knew that they had enlisted in the Lord's army for service, and not merely for dress parade. They realized that present lessons and experiences were under providential guidance, and would work out for their good. They suffered pain--we are not to suppose that a miracle was performed to hinder their feeling the lashes, else there would have been no merit in endurance;--but their faith so firmly grasped the situation, and the Lord's word of promise, that we read, "They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his Name."

The world is full of grumblers, and with good cause often; as the Apostle remarks, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together." But as he also declares, "We, who have the first-fruits of the spirit, groan within ourselves." The Lord's people are not to parade their difficulties, bemoaning their lot; on the contrary, they have the throne of grace, and the instructions of the Word of God teaching them why present evil conditions are permitted at all; and how and when and why the time is nearing in which all tears will be wiped off all faces, and there shall be no more sighing and crying and dying. Instead therefore of groaning before the world they should rejoice and show forth the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. Our sympathy for the poor world without these advantages should so bestir us to tell them the gospel, that our own woes would be smothered;--partially forgotten. And if faithfulness to the Lord and his truth brings us extra hardships, as it did to the apostles, this, also, is a cause for rejoicing as it was with them. The Master instructed us that we should first have sat down

and counted the cost of discipleship, so that thereafter none of the things coming to us as his disciples would move us. True, we may all have in our natural dispositions a tendency to repine, to grumble, to bemoan afflictions which come to us, even in the service of the truth; but as we become more and more developed in the heavenly character the Lord surely will expect of us that we shall gradually attain more and more to that standard which he sets for us; in which the trials and difficulties of the present will be more than offset, more than over-balanced by his gracious promises, and by the witness of his spirit, that all these things are working together for good to us,--working out for us the greater glory by preparing us therefor. The developed Christian will surely find himself counting present trials and difficulties, even tho' severe to the natural man, to be but "light afflictions, not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

The record is that the apostles so rejoiced that the threatenings of the Sanhedrin were powerless to stop them from declaring the good tidings--they preached not only in the Temple, but in their homes,--wherever they had opportunity. And so it must be with the same message in all those who receive it now, as well as then. They do not need to be "called" by a large salary to the ministry of the truth; but without any salaries, and even with the wages of tribulation, stripes and imprisonment, they rejoice in the privilege saying, "He hath put a new song into my mouth;--even his loving-kindness."

We must again call attention to the attitude of the apostles--their boldness and their meekness. They knew well the Lord's regulation, that his people should be "subject to the powers that be," and that they "should not speak evil of the rulers of their people;" and following this instruction we find that while stating the truth very plainly their words contain nothing of venom or bitterness or threat. No wonder that the people took note of them, that they had been with Jesus! At the same time, in respect to religious matters they recognized a higher law, and that the same God who directed that they should be subject to the powers that be, had given them a message of peace and joy and blessing which was to be declared everywhere. They could not permit the civil power nor the religious power of their time to hinder their obedience to God in this matter.

So it should be with us to-day; we are to be strictly law-abiding, speaking no evil of the government, nor of its servants: if God sees fit to permit them, that is reason enough why we should be subject to them. When his time shall come he will institute his own King upon his own throne, and we shall rejoice thereat; but meantime we can have neither part nor lot with those who defame the laws and defame

the rulers. We may see various things which our consciences and judgment of the Lord's Word indicate to us are seriously wrong; yet we are to remember

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that even the poorest government in the world is far superior to anarchy, and our sentiments are to be always on the law-abiding side of every question. This, however, must not hinder us from defending the truth and its interests whenever they are assailed;-- in love, and with the wisdom from above. If the Lord has opened a door of opportunity for us for the promulgation of the truth, and if, in his providence, the laws are favorable, we are to use the opportunities, and to protest against any obstruction of them-- yet not with bitterness. (For instance, our appeal from illegal Postoffice rulings.) If special privileges then are closed to us, we are to submit, remembering that no power could prevail against us except as God would permit it. But, like the apostles, we are to continue to use our talents, our tongues, our pens, in the service of the truth, in making known the good tidings of great joy, wholly regardless of what this obedience to God shall cost us in the way of earthly interests.

While touching this subject we urge upon all of our readers to copy the methods of the apostles in their quiet, forceful speaking of the truth. Rarely have we found much good to result from boisterous argument; and frequently it has, to our knowledge, resulted in evil. Those who seem to need boisterous

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argument evidently have not an ear for the truth, and should be let alone. If the Lord's servants adopt such methods they are likely not only to do no good to their hearers, but evil, and especially likely to do injury to their own hearts. The spirit of strife is not the spirit of the Lord: his spirit is described in the Scriptures as "the meek and quiet spirit," not the contentious, boastful, arrogant spirit; and whoever attempts to serve the truth and to spread it abroad in boisterous argument and boastful manner, is doing injury to the cause as well as to himself and his hearer.

The truth was impressed by the plain, simple statement of the facts of the case, by men whose hearts had been cleansed by the truth and whose lives were irreproachably moral--whose conduct demonstrated their honesty, whose joy and rejoicing proved that they had in them the new mind of the holy spirit making them glad. It was by these manifestations of the spirit and power of the truth that the Lord was glorified, and that the hearers were blessed; and so it will be to-day, and we should order our conduct and words and sentiments

accordingly.

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DECISION IN CHARACTER BUILDING.

How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God follow him, but, if Baal, follow him."--I Kings 18:21.

MULTITUDES are in an undecided condition of mind, not only as respects the worship of God, and as respects their faith, but also in regard to the common affairs of life. They are not devoid of good intentions, good resolutions, hopes and ambitions; but these are rather vague and shapeless. Their thoughts, their intentions, have not crystalized. As a result they are making little progress and accomplishing little good, either in or for themselves or others. Even worldly people who manifest great decision in business and social and moral matters lack decision in religious affairs.

The poet has truly said, "Life is real, life is earnest; and the grave is not the goal;" but the difficulty with many is that they have not even so good a goal as the grave would be. If they could even have that before their mind as an end; if they could even think of how they would wish to terminate their lives eventually, and leave some luminous foot prints in the sands of time that would be helpful to others and an honor to themselves, it would be very much better, indeed, than to pass through life with no aim, no wish, no thought, except to eat, to drink, to sleep, to gratify earthly tastes. We believe that it is even much better that men set their ambition upon money or fame or some other object, than to have no fixed purpose before them in life; yet money and fame and such matters end with the grave, and the Lord's consecrated people, inspired by new hopes, new aims, new ambitions, beyond the grave, have much advantage every way over all others.

Nevertheless, even those who have been so highly favored of God that the eyes of their understanding have been opened,--that they have caught glimpses of the glorious things in reservation for the Lord's faithful, are frequently lax and measurably indifferent to these wonderful things which should induce them to zeal and inspire them with courage and strength. What is the difficulty? Why do they not accomplish more? The answer frequently should be that it is because of indecision. They should decide promptly, but they hesitate,--holding important questions in abeyance, and continuing to balance and to weigh matters which they already determined are right. They

halt between two opinions; they hesitate to take the Lord's Word fully and entirely, and to walk boldly forward in the right direction, even when they clearly discern the footsteps of Jesus and the proper course for them as his followers. As one point after another comes up and is thus set aside indefinitely, the whole Christian course of that individual is stagnated and fresh duties and privileges as they appear, are stopped in the way by the muddle of mind which unsettled questions of years produce; thus indecision has more or less hindered them all their lives. By and by there is such an accumulation of undecided points and matters that they feel the case is almost hopeless, become discouraged, grow cold, indifferent, and perhaps fall completely away from the faith and its service.

For all such our text is specially appropriate. We want to decide, first of all, who is our Master, who is our God; then, having concluded, we want to decide promptly that his servants we should and will be. The Master warned us of the impossibility of any other course being satisfactory, saying, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Attempt to do so will make us and all with whom we are particularly identified unhappy. Almost everyone will acknowledge that there is a Supreme Being, and that it is the duty of his creatures, to serve and obey him. The whole question then should be, not as to obedience and service, but merely, Who is our God? We see many of the worshipers of Baal, Mammon, energetic in their service, and we should feel ashamed if we who, by the grace of God, know the true God and his gracious plan, are not as zealous, as persevering, as energetic, as are the servants of error. "What manner of persons ought we to be?" We ought most positively to be committed to that which we believe to be the truth, and we ought to be most zealous in its service.

A part of the mistake is in the exercise of a wrong kind of caution;--proper enough in respect to earthly affairs, in which we have to guard our interests against unscrupulous fellows; but out of place, impedimenta, in our dealings with God. This wrong caution says,--Do nothing, until you see how it will all end;--I must walk by mental sight at least. But this kind of worldly wisdom will not do, in dealing with God. He makes the rules by which we may approach him and progress in his favor. One of his rules is, that every item of truth we learn must be accepted and acted upon before we are ready for more. They that receive the truth in the love of it, will surely serve it with all the decision they can command and acquire;--piece by piece, as they receive it. They who on receiving truth balance it and ponder long whether it will not ultimately cost too much, thus give evidence that their love for the truth is not great enough,--that it is mixed with selfishness. Such must

cultivate love of the truth until it outweighs all other things, else they will not be fit for the Kingdom. The Lord's charge against those who are about to fall in the present testing time, is that,--They received not the truth in the love of it.--2 Thes. 2:10-12.

"CHOOSE YE THIS DAY."

After Israel had reached the promised land, Joshua sought to bring them to such a point of decision. He called them together, recited to them the Lord's favor and blessing enjoyed thus far, and expressed himself in noble language, saying, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve;...as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Josh. 24:15.) So, dear friends, we who realize that the Lord has been blessing, guiding and sustaining us in the past, should come to a full, positive decision as respects our course of life. We should not be content for one moment longer to go along indefinitely, serving whiles the Lord, and whiles Mammon (selfishness). We should settle the matter at once, and for all time, that we will be the Lord's.

The very fact of coming to a positive decision is a great blessing, and a great help in the formation of character. Every time we come to a decision, on any question, it strengthens mind and character and makes us that much more ready for another test--along some other line, perhaps. One decision for the right prepares the way for others in the same direction, just as hesitancy, indecision upon one point prepares us for hesitancy upon all points, and more or less stops our Christian progress and character-building.

We are not advocating rashness--the doing of something without a reasonable, proper amount of consideration. But we are urging upon the Lord's people the cultivation of promptness, decision of mind, in respect to questions we have sufficiently examined. Some things may of necessity require pondering, but many things in life require no such delay to reach a proper decision. The majority of the questions which present themselves before the bar of our minds could be decided in a moment; and the less time we take in reaching a decision on such problems the better for us, and for the upbuilding of proper character in this regard.

We need to have some touchstone, as it were, some matter which will help us to decide, which will enable the mind to reach a decision quickly. This touchstone should be God's will; so that to perceive the Lord's will in respect to any question would be to settle it--as quickly as discerned. There should be no thought of opposing the divine will. There should be no temporizing, no haggling to see what a thing

would cost, once we discern that it is the Lord's will. There should be no further question about the rejection of any matter which we discern to be contrary to the Lord's will; no matter how enticing, no matter how much of profit or of advantage there may be connected therewith.

Ability to decide quickly, and to decide always on the right side, what the Lord's will is, requires some experience and discipline; but the sooner we begin the sooner we will become proficient; the more energetically we set ourselves to know the Lord's will and to do it, and to show him by our promptness that we delight to do his will, the better and the quicker will we find our characters established on proper lines.

There are many gods presenting their claims to us, and seeking our reverence. To some, perhaps to the vast majority, self is the most prominent idol and false god; to others it is fame; to others the family; to others wealth. But all these false gods are more or less related, and the one name, Mammon, selfishness, is appropriate to them all. It requires not a great deal of discernment to decide that none of these ambitions is worthy of us, and that the worship of our hearts and the sacrifices of life should all be to the true God.

TO-DAY IF YOU SHOULD HEAR HIS VOICE, OBEY!

The Scriptures appeal to us along these lines of prompt decision, and it is because these appeals are neglected, not obeyed, that many of the Lord's people are so lean and so undeveloped, both in knowledge and in character. Mark the appeal, "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." The suggestion is that the matter be not put off for another day. We cannot tell how distinctly we will hear the voice of the Lord's providence speaking to us tomorrow. On the contrary, we know that even as we may become accustomed to an earthly call, or an earthly alarm, so that by and by it would cease to awaken us, so our spiritual ears become accustomed to the important messages reaching them from the Lord's Word. They will have less and less weight and influence, and will become less and less helpful to us in proportion as we neglect them and fail to act upon them. Does not this explain the fact that some who

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have newly come into the truth, are farther along both in faith and good works than some whose ears were blest long ago?

We are still in the beginning of a new year and a new century, and now is a favorable time for us to make good resolutions. One of these should surely be that henceforth we will cultivate decision of character;

--that when we hear the voice of the Lord we will respond promptly. So that when we see a work of the Lord, which we have the privilege of attending to, it will be performed not only willingly and well, but also speedily. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver"--a prompt giver;--not merely as respects money matters, as this text is generally applied, but in respect to all of our little offerings and sacrifices to him and for his cause' sake. If we would be pleasing to the Lord and grow in his favor and in nearness to him, we must bring our hearts more and more into the condition that he approves, that he loves, viz., heartiness, cheerfulness, promptness in every service we may render. The trouble with many Christians is, that they have not thoroughly learned what a great privilege we of this Gospel age enjoy,--in being permitted to present our little sacrifices and self-denials to the Lord, under the assurance that our imperfect works shall be acceptable through Christ to God.

We have all noted with pleasure the wonderful success of that wonderful Apostle Paul. It is well, therefore, that we shall note that one of the chief elements contributing to the success of his apostleship

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was this element of character--decision. Mark how this quality of his shines out in the statement, "This one thing I do," etc. He had only one real aim or purpose in life, toward which he was bending all his energies. He had cast aside all others as weights and hindrances, and as not being worthy to be compared with this one service, so high in its point of privilege. The one thing he did was to serve the Lord, to serve the brethren, to serve the truth. All other matters were secondary to this. If he could accomplish this one thing the results would be so blessed, so happifying, both now and everlastingly, that he could afford to count all other things and objects and aims as loss and dross and not worthy of comparison.-- Phil. 3:7,8,13,14.

This is the spirit that all of the Lord's overcoming people should have. All do not have this character or quality of disposition by nature; but in proportion as we lack, the Lord will reckon to us of his own merit to compensate, if he finds in us the spirit, the will, the disposition, to thus follow the example of Jesus and the apostles and all the faithful. If we are weak in this respect, lacking in this quality of decision and firmness of character, we need to be more alert, and to go the more frequently to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and to find grace to help. But those who are naturally weak, and who yet have tried this matter according to the lines here laid down,--who have sought to cultivate this principle of character and decision and firmness for the right, give abundant

testimony that the Lord is their helper and that in thus following the directions of his Word and the examples of faithfulness, they have become strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. May this be a blessed year for all the faithful in Christ Jesus, along the lines of character-building, energy and firmness for the right and for the truth, as God grants us to see these.

Let us not forget that it is just such a class that the Lord is seeking, to be the Bride and joint-heir of his Son. He is not looking for those who are perfect in this respect; for there is weakness along this line throughout the whole human family; there is none perfect in this or in other respects, none fit for the Kingdom by nature. It will encourage us, perhaps, to remember that the Lord is taking the weak things of the world and making them strong, and that in proportion as we submit our wills to his will we are transformed by the renewing of our minds, and that he thus works in us to will and to do his good pleasure in the establishment of strong, decisive characters, through the promises of his Word. To it, as represented in Jesus, he exhorts us to look, while we endeavor to run with patience the race set before us, trusting in him who has redeemed us and called us, and who has promised to be our ever-present helper in every time of need.

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DEACON STEPHEN, CHRISTIAN MARTYR.

--ACTS 6:7-15--FEB. 23.--

"Fear not them which kill the body,
but are not able to kill the soul."

STEPHEN may be acknowledged the second Christian martyr--for surely our Lord Jesus was the first. We must begin with the first verse of our lesson-chapter in order to trace the history of this worthy soldier of the cross. An emergency arose in the Church, calling for a force of seven deacons to look after various temporal matters, and Stephen was one of these seven, all of whom were chosen by the congregation, not by the apostles, as men of honest reputation, wise, and full of the holy spirit. This incident suggests to us the loose character of the organization of the early Church. It had not cast-iron rules and laws, except that the Lord, the Redeemer, was the Head of the Church, and that none could be recognized as members thereto except as they recognized him as their Savior and Lord, and made consecration to him, receiving his spirit, and recognized as of his appointment

and of the holy spirit's designation his specially chosen apostles, as the authorized instructors of the Church. Aside from this, the necessities of each case seem to have guided: and yet, we may safely presume that in all the arrangements in the Church, as well as in the teachings of the apostles, the holy spirit directed; --for the benefit also of those believing on the Lord through their word, throughout the entire age.

In a previous lesson we saw that a measure of communism was early established in the Church; but the incidents of this lesson clearly imply that it was only limited, and not a complete division of property. It was evidently the intention of the early Church to provide for the poor of their number who were without means of livelihood. Prominent amongst those provided for, if not the only ones, were widows without income; such at that time must have been comparatively helpless and dependent upon charity, since there were so few opportunities for earning a living, especially amongst women.

We are not to suppose that there was any intentional partiality or neglect of the Grecian more than of the Hebrew women. Apparently it was unintentional, and possibly arose from the fact that the apostles, native-born, appreciated more keenly the needs of the native widows than of the foreign-born. These were all Jewesses, of course, whether born in Palestine or born in Greece. Up to this time the Gospel had not been sent to others,--Gentiles. No doubt there was some reasonable cause for the murmur. In any event the apostles manifested their honesty of purpose in the matter by promptly instituting measures for the correction of the difficulty. There is a lesson in this for all of the Lord's people: if difficulties arise, based upon temporal questions, likely to sprout a "root of bitterness" or to cause a schism in the Church, the proper course would be to throw the responsibility upon the shoulders of the whole congregation--to ask for the election of some of the number who could give the matter better attention, and see that all were justly dealt with. We are not to forget that in this as in other ways the Lord has clearly indicated that the Church as a whole is under his supervision, his care, and that it is

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therefore proper that the general affairs of the Church be conducted by the congregation and not by one man, nor by a clerical class.

No doubt some of those chosen for the serving of tables--the money collection and the food distribution --were representatives of the Grecian brethren who, knowing the peculiarities of the Grecian customs, would be the better able to see to the welfare of the Grecian widows. It is here that we get acquainted with Stephen, as one of the seven chosen deacons. The

word "deacon" signifies runner, attendant, servant. The "elders" of the Church were more particularly chosen according to their Christian character and aptness to teach, while the deacons were chosen according to Christian character and aptness in business affairs. In both instances, however, the Christian character, the holiness of spirit and wisdom were primary considerations. So with the Lord's people to-day: those chosen to any part of the service should first of all be recognized as the best and the wisest of the number--the possession of a holy, meek and quiet spirit, of great value, being carefully considered --then natural abilities.

In Stephen's case we see an illustration of the Lord's methods of advancing his people step by step in his service: (1) He was honored with a knowledge of the truth: faithful in his acceptance of it, and zealous toward the Lord, he ere long manifested these qualities; and under the guidance of the holy spirit, was chosen a deacon. (2) Faithfulness in this, serving tables, prepared him for further opportunities, and (3) we find him exercising the gift of healing and performing signs in attestation of his ministry of the truth; which implies that he had actually attained to the position of an elder in the Church tho' the apostles residing in Jerusalem, perhaps, made an unnecessary election of

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elders,--for they were all elders. (I Pet. 5:1.) Stephen was so full of the spirit of the truth and devotion to its service that he had the high honor (4) of being the first one of the brethren to follow the Master's footsteps in a sacrificial death. Here surely was an advancement in service and its honor that may well quicken and energize all of the Lord's people to greater efforts to serve and please the same Master. He who thus accepted the consecrated Stephen, and advanced him step by step in his service, is ready and willing to-day to take and use those who are similarly consecrated, and burning with heavenly zeal. He is willing to make of such burning and shining lights in the Church, if they in turn are willing to suffer with him, that they may also be glorified together in due time.-- Rom. 8:17.

Stephen's faith and power and opportunities for service came to him along the same lines as faith and power have come to the Lord's people since--whole-hearted devotion to the Lord, to his people and to his truth. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Had Stephen been selfseeking and ambitious for honor of men or of the brethren we may be sure we would have heard little of him, unless, like Ananias, his approbateness had resulted in his being made an example of evil-doing. This is a danger which besets every brother chosen by the church to any service. Hence

the apostle's caution "Be not many of you teachers brethren." Hence the necessity that the Church choose for its servants only those of humble mind; and the need of care amongst these servants that they fall not into the snare of the Adversary, and after having preached to others, themselves become castaways.-- Jas. 3:1; I Tim. 3:6,7; I Cor. 9:27.

Stephen in preaching got into a debate with some of his day, and was more than a match for them. As we read, "They were not able to withstand the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." We are not to suppose that Stephen was the greatest of all orators, nor even that he had no peers amongst those with whom he disputed. In this case the adage was well applied, "Thrice armed is he who hath his quarrel just." It was because Stephen had the truth, the right side of the controversy, and because God was with him, that he was more than a match for any of his adversaries.

The same God is still with his people; and the Lord's Word, therefore, is still worthy of all acceptance, --"I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries shall be able to gainsay or resist." (Luke 21:15.) Do we not see this same principle illustrated to-day, when humble ones amongst the Lord's people are more than a match for all their adversaries? The truth being powerful, prevails, though it is not always acknowledged to prevail, even as it was not acknowledged by Stephen's enemies.

We are not advocating public debating of the truth. We believe that debates, as a rule, accomplish little good; because the opponents of the truth are apt to conduct their arguments unfairly, deceptively--apt to strive for victory, rather than to strive for the truth. However, there are cases to-day, like this case of Stephen's, in which the opponents of the truth are the aggressors; and in such cases those who have the truth are not to be ashamed of it, nor fearful, but to trust in the promise of the Lord for words and wisdom for the occasion. We are not given a report of the discussion, but from what we know of Stephen's character, so well illustrated in the discourse subsequently delivered, we cannot escape the conviction that he spoke to his opponents in a kind, generous, reasonable manner--that he neither ranted nor stormed nor endeavored to throw a dust of false arguments. He had the truth, which is sharper than a two-edged sword, and we may be sure that he spoke the truth "in love," according to the apostolic command.--Eph. 4:15.

Stephen's disputants were evidently of the Grecian Jews, and Stephen himself was also probably of this class. Possibly Saul of Tarsus, afterwards the Apostle Paul, was amongst those who disputed with him, as he himself tells us that he was a sort of ringleader amongst those who killed him. (Acts 22:20.) We cannot help wondering to what extent young Saul, the lawyer, instructed by Gamaliel, and an adept in logic,

may have taken some lessons and caught some ideas from Stephen's reasoning--not enough, however, to make transformation of his career.

It was Stephen's turn to be called before the Sanhedrin, that he might give the leaders of his people a gospel sermon, the basis of which was Jesus and the resurrection. His opponents, who could not down him

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in argument, were determined to destroy him; and, like other zealots, deluded by superstition, they were nevertheless influenced by their higher principles to desire to accomplish his destruction legally--that is to say, with a form of law. Alas, how many people now, as well as then, of comparatively noble mind, succeed in "deceiving their own selves" into thinking that a wrong becomes a virtue, becomes right, if to any extent they can wrap it in the folds of the law! The Lord's people need to have the spirit of the law, the spirit of justice, the spirit of righteousness: without this even the best balanced minds may be led astray under the pressure of zeal, superstition, or error.

The doctors of the law and members of the Sanhedrin (Saul of Tarsus is supposed to have been a member) did not wish to be parties directly to the charges, nor to seem to be interested in the destruction of a noble man. They therefore procured others to give testimony that would be of the kind desired--testimony upon which it would be possible for their distorted judgments and consciences to render a death verdict. Strangely enough, the second martyr, like the first, was convicted of blasphemy against God and against the Temple, and without any more foundation for the charges than in the case of his illustrious Master. Of course the charges were distorted, and yet there was a measure of truth in them. Just how much allowance should be made for those who convicted the Lord and Stephen on such evidence is perhaps difficult for us to judge. Nor is it necessary, because the judgment of such matters is not yet put into our hands. The Lord alone knows to what extent the prejudiced mind was unable to discern the truth, and to what extent the Adversary succeeded in blinding the judgment, so as to make the light appear darkness, the truth appear error.

Doubtless, as Stephen heard the charges against him, and noticed the advancement of the case, he mentally remarked the correspondence between these charges against him and those upon which his Master was convicted. We may be sure that some such thoughts were passing through his mind when his face was so wonderfully lit up with the indwelling joy, that it is recorded that all sitting in the Sanhedrin "looking steadfastly on him saw his face, as it had been the face of an angel." But even an angelic face could not move such

hearts, some of the same, doubtless, that had sat in condemnation of the Master himself. Seemingly, Stephen's witness was fruitless, so far as his auditors were concerned; the same might have been said respecting our Master's trial and testimony. And yet, as the latter bore fruit on the day of Pentecost and afterward, so, doubtless, Stephen's testimony bore fruit subsequently. Who can say that that beaming and angelic face was not one of the "pricks" against which Saul of Tarsus had been contending for some time, when the Lord interrupted him enroute to Damascus?

Who can tell that experiences connected with this martyrdom may not have been valuable not only to Saul, but to others? At all events, it was Stephen's duty, as it is our duty, to be faithful under all circumstances, under all conditions, regardless of whether appearances indicate the accomplishment of much, or of little good. We are to remember that the Lord's work is in his own hands, and that our part is to be faithful to him and to the truth, to the extent of our opportunities.

The Editor would like, for himself and for all the Pilgrims, and for all the elders of the Church everywhere, and for all the brethren who speak at all, publicly or privately, in the name of Jesus, that Stephen's beaming face might be impressed upon our memories. If it is, and if every time we stand forth before men publicly or privately, as the representatives of our Lord, we could so realize his blessing and our privilege as his servants, that it would fill our hearts, and beam forth from our faces, in gladness, in thankfulness, for the privilege of serving, then indeed we would have the highest degree of blessing to ourselves, and doubtless also would bring the largest degree of blessing to all those whose hearts would be prepared for the truth, and also for those not yet ready for it, but who are under the Lord's discipline and guidance, in preparation for it, as was Saul of Tarsus.

Our Golden Text is very appropriate in this connection. It is well that the Lord's people, especially when they come into trying positions on account of their fidelity to the truth, should remember these, the Master's words. Men may kill our bodies, or they may speak evil of them, or despitefully use them otherwise; but it is beyond their power to injure us as new creatures, or to ruin our prospects as respects the future life. That life which the Lord has promised to his faithful,--the resurrection life,--is beyond the power of man. It is the eternal, the invaluable life. If we gain it, no matter what the cost may be, as respects the present life, and mortal-body condition, we shall have made a great bargain, we shall have gained a great prize. All who really appreciate it see it to be a "pearl of great price," for which they, like the Master, are willing to lay down all,--to sell all that they have, that they may obtain it.

God is able to kill the soul--able to blot out existence entirely--and he has threatened to do so in all cases of wilful deliberate sin, against full light and knowledge. This is a cause both for comfort and for fear. For comfort, as opposed to the false human teaching that the masses will spend an eternity of woe: for fear, lest after having tasted of divine goodness and learned of God's gracious provisions for such as obey him, any of us should seem to come short and lose our all--life!

To have the proper course in life, to be able to meet the trials and difficulties of life as they come to us, and to meet them in the proper spirit which the Lord directs--in the spirit of rejoicing in tribulation, and counting such experiences all joy,--it is necessary that all fear of man, which brings a snare, shall be removed. And it is our Lord's direction that we shall fear Jehovah, and not fear our mortal fellows. The righteous are bold as a lion, as well as gentle as a dove, and meek as a lamb. This peculiar combination should be found in every Christian, and we doubt if it will be found elsewhere.

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"BETWEEN EVENINGS"--A JEWISH VIEW.

Dear Brother Russell:--Allow me to express to you my deep gratitude for your kindness in supplying me gratuitously with the Watch Tower and booklets. I have not language at my command to convey to you how thankful I feel to our heavenly Father for raising you up as one of his honored servants in the spreading of the present truth, and trying to build up and assist those of the household of faith in their walk in the narrow way. It is proving a great blessing to me. I lay awake for hours meditating on the great and precious promises of God and the glorious prospect there is in store for those whom he has called according to his purpose.

In reading the last Tower for Dec. 1st, I was much helped by your interpretation of "The Voices of the Three Signs," also with the typical meaning of "The Passover Lamb." But I can not quite understand what you mean when you say, "On the fourteenth day of the month it was to be killed between evenings (between six o'clock the one evening and six o'clock the next evening--the usual Jewish day)." If the lamb had to be killed on the fourteenth day,

between the evening of that day and the evening of the next, which would be the fifteenth, it would have to take place after six o'clock in the evening on the fourteenth day, and that would not correspond with the time of the death of the antitype as recorded in Matt. 26:45,46,50; Luke 23:44,46; and yet the properties which the passover lamb was to possess, the manner in which it was to die, the effects which were to be produced, and the ceremonies which were to be observed, as recorded in the twelfth chapter of Exodus, have been fulfilled in a most remarkable and striking manner in the promised Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, our blessed Lord.

Having been brought up in the Jewish faith up to the age of 20, I always understood the matter to be thus: The killing of the lamb was on the evening of the fourteenth day, or more correctly speaking, according to the original, *Bain haabayim*, between the evenings, that is, between the sun's declining west and his setting about three o'clock p.m. For the Jews observe two evenings in each day. The first commences after twelve o'clock at noon, and the second at three o'clock, p.m. Between these two evenings the daily evening sacrifice was offered up and immediately after the passover lamb was killed and prepared. But if the passover fell on the weekly Sabbath, i.e., on Friday, they began an hour sooner, that they might despatch their business by the time that the Sabbath began. Hence that day is called the preparation of the passover.--John 19:14.

The Jews computed their days from evening to evening; i.e., from the setting of the sun of one day to the setting again on the next day. This appears to be the command given by Moses, "From even to even shall ye celebrate your Sabbath." (Lev. 23:32.) Moses, in giving an account of the Creation, says, "And there was evening, and there was morning, one day." (Gen. 1:5.) By the evening and the morning the Jews understand the same portion of time that we call day and night, or twenty-four hours; the former continued from the rising of the sun until its setting, and from that time till his reappearance was called the night. The division of time into hours was not known in the days of Moses.--Compare Gen. 15:12; 18:1; 19:1.

The day was again divided into two equal portions; from the rising of the sun until noon was the morning, and after that, until the sun had gone down, was the evening. Hence we read only of morning and evening sacrifices. Again, the morning and the evening were divided each into two equal parts, for the regulation of the morning and evening sacrifices and prayers.

The morning sacrifice and prayer was allowed to be offered at any time between the rising of the sun and the third hour, i.e., 9 a.m., and the evening

sacrifice and prayer may be offered up at any time during the first evening, Hebrew, erev katon, the short or lesser evening, i.e., from noon until ninth hour, or 3 p.m.; and from that time until sun setting, is called in the Hebrew erev gadol, i.e., the greater evening. It was between these two evenings the paschal lamb was to be slain, and so was Jesus, the antitype, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world as recorded.

I remain, dear Brother Russell,
Faithfully yours in the Lord,
J. Gronowsky,--England.

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LETTERS OF INTEREST.

Dear Brother Russell:--I have been just a little tardy in sending in my offering to the "Good Hopes" fund; but I have desired to tell you how the Lord is blessing the efforts put forth by one of his weak and timid children. Praise his holy name, he has such wonderful power! About two weeks ago the pastor of the M. E. church gave me a conditional promise to take my name from the record. This did not satisfy me, and I requested a prayer-meeting at our home in the country. Yesterday a half dozen of the church members, including the pastor and wife, came out, and I had the opportunity I had long wished and prayed for. I asked God to help me to tell some of the good things which he has given me to see and understand from the Bible, through the use of the Key, which he allowed you to supply. Praise his name, he did help me boldly to tell of them. I was strongly criticised, but it was done quietly. Bro. U. again promised that he would take my name from the record, as I told him the Lord had given me assurance that it was his will that I do so. (Rev. 18:4.)

Bro. U. once told me that he read Dawn fifteen years ago, and thought he burned it. He tried to persuade me not to read such books, saying they were the work of the devil. Yesterday he and his wife told me they had a set of "Dawns," and that there were many good things in them. I wonder if they secured them after my first talk with them.

One sister told me of the influence of a talk I gave the Epworth League last year, when I was assigned to lead the meeting. How glad I was that the topic given was the Parable of the Draw Net! I tried to bring out prominently the idea that the Lord is not trying to save the world in this, the Gospel age,

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since their time is in the future; the Gospel age being for the choosing of the little flock, the bride of Christ. So the sister said that on account of my influence they could not get any one to join the church. How I wish she was not too blind to discern the Lord's work!

One of the friends to whom I had the "Tower" sent, has written thanking me, and stating that it was just the kind of reading she enjoyed. The Lord is pouring out great blessing upon our home, tho my brother is the only one who has come fully into harmony with the Truth.

I pray God's blessing to rest continually upon you, and ask that you pray that his work here may continue to grow.

Yours in the work of the Master,
Jessie Ganson,--Nebraska.

Dear Brother:--

I am so glad to tell you that two or three in _____ are becoming interested in "Dawn" writings. I took two Towers to a friend to whom we had previously lent some. He delighted me by saying, "They are always welcome." We then loaned him a "Dawn," and were told that he said to another friend that "he had a book now which helped him to sort it out for himself."

A poor, old, but intelligent friend of ours was speaking in her parson's presence of what she had read in the Dawn. He said, "Have you seen them? Burn them, burn them!" He warns all not to be led astray by us. He lately got up a sermon on Hell, and had the town filled with bills. We, of course, did not go, and have not been for many months. We study our Bibles, Dawns and Towers, and get more good than we ever thought to get in this life.

We delight in the Towers, and when they are read, count the days until the next one will come. And how we are longing for the next volume of Dawn, I cannot tell you. We can't keep the light to ourselves, but feel as though we must try to share it with others. Faithfully yours,

Mrs. S. J.,--Cumberland.

Dear Friends:--Through the kindness of some brethren here I have been supplied with Millennial Dawn, Vols. I. and II, and have not the language to express the joy and comfort afforded me through the Divine Plan of the Ages, revealing more abundantly the inexpressible loving-kindness of our Heavenly

Father. I have been an ordained minister of the Baptist church for ten years, endeavoring to enlighten the people and comfort the saints. In fact, I have spent my time and living in the work, and have just come to the understanding that very much that I thought to be meat in due season, and which I gave them, was but the husks of tradition. Imagine, then, the comfort, the joy, the consolation since the pall of gloom is removed, and I begin to understand the teaching of the Word concerning Restitution, etc.

Some of my friends are getting alarmed; they think such exposition of Scripture very dangerous, and I desire to be fully prepared to meet their objections.

Yours in much love,
L. B. Pounds,--Alabama.

Dear Brother Russell:

Will you kindly give me some instruction as to how I am to answer the "world" when questioned about my Church? The people who know me ask why I do not go to church. I tell them that I belong to no man-made systems; that the Lord Jesus is my Teacher, and the Bible my Church; that Christ Jesus has set me free, and I belong to him, and to do his will is more to me than my daily bread.

To this Churchianity answers: "So do we belong to him; and we assemble ourselves together to show the world that we love to serve him, and you do not." I can only make answer that my trust is in him; that I know he leadeth me, and that so long as I walk by the light he has given me I shall never be alone nor fall; and that by the grace of God I am called to be a witness to the fact of his presence now in this sick old world. Blessed be his holy name! I can not say that I belong to your church, for I do not even know by what name your church is called. Besides, I do not know if you recognize me as a sister. I can not say that I am a Second Adventist, for I know nothing about them, except that they are looking for Christ to come at any moment with an audible "shout" and visible "great glory," which I do not believe to be the correct view.

I have found only four persons here that know anything of your publications; and they have only a vague idea as to the purport of your teaching. One woman told me she had been informed that Millennial Dawn and Ingersoll taught on parallel lines (Oh!), and her pastor told her to have nothing to do with it for it was "a dangerous book." Well, I sent her home with Dawn Vol. II., and a handful of Towers. She will read them and get a blessing, for she has "ears to hear." The second person, a man who has a set of Dawns, says that he bought them just to help on an agent, that he was a good (?) Baptist and that he could not afford to read Dawns, as he did not want to be called a crank. The third person, a woman, held up her

hands, and cried out: "Oh, my! I am a Baptist! a Baptist, from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet!" Adding, "I suppose you are waiting to hear the trumpet sound." I told her the trumpet was sounding now, and that I was awake and conscious of every note it made.

She stared at me, as though she thought I had lost my mind; and finally said she would read the Tower to please me, but as for the Dawn, it was "too much for her" (which is the literal truth). I gave her a few "Towers" and left her. A few days after her father (a preacher) came on a visit, and the Towers were bundled up and sent back to me. I long to point out Jeremiah 25:35,36 to such.

As to my experience with "Babylon" at large,--I am laughed at and looked upon as a sort of harmless lunatic. My old friends, who have known me as a devout church-woman for years, are really concerned about my sanity and spiritual condition, because I do not attend church services, nor participate in their sociables, fairs, etc. And when I refused to have anything to do with the "Ladies' Aid Society" the climax was reached, and I am now a dangerous person to know.

Glory be to God the Father, I rejoice and am "exceeding glad" to be counted worthy to suffer the least bit for "his name's sake." I know I am gaining knowledge, and I feel that I am growing in grace, according to his good pleasure. I have the faith, and, thanks be unto God, I have the witness of the spirit, by which I am exercised daily to do his holy will with joy and thanksgiving.

Will you excuse this long letter? There is no human being of our faith near with whom I can commune. In that respect I am utterly alone. I feel that your great loving heart will respond to my call for instruction, and a word of encouragement.

May his peace, grace, and love ever rest upon you and yours. Pray for me.

Yours in the faith,

B. L. PALING.--Alabama.

[Answered by letter--and printed matter. Editor.]

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SEMI-MONTHLY.

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LETTERS FOR THE EDITOR SHOULD BE SENT TO ALLEGHENY, PA., U.S.A.
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Those of the interested who, by reason of old age, or other infirmity
 or adversity, are unable to pay for the TOWER, will be supplied FREE, if
 they send a Postal Card each December, stating their case and requesting
 the paper. We are not only willing, but anxious, that all such be on our
 list continually.

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 or less potent messenger of the truth, even on its outside,
 by the use of these envelopes. They catch the attention
 not only of those to whom they are addressed, but postmen
 and others have an opportunity, and often the curiosity, to
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 form.

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We welcome the lists of new subscribers now coming in,
 and greatly appreciate the zeal of the friends, manifested thus.
 We offer no "Premiums," preferring to have only such help as
 is tendered to the Lord by grateful hearts. They shall receive
 their reward in another form,--from the Master.

But, however glad we are to get new names on our lists,
 we are still more pleased to have old ones continue there. It
 will be with pain that we will now, shortly, cut off our list the
 names of several hundred whose subscriptions expired a year
 ago, and who have neglected to send money for renewal, or
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list,--as the "Lord's Poor."

We give all such this final notice; and explain that unless you state the matter explicitly, no record is made in our subscription books; and thus our list-clerk assumes that you have not been heard from and are either dead or no longer interested; and the name is dropped.

If you sent us money and we received it, you get a mail acknowledgment of it. If any mistake appears drop us a card at once, explaining. If your paper ceases to come to you, write at once; we will be glad to reenter your name; but it would save both you and us trouble if you would express your intentions promptly when your subscription (whether cash, credit or free) expires. We desire that all the deeply interested shall have the journal so long as they live and it is published. We have no desire to force or intrude it upon any one.

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THE HOPES OF THE EARLY CHURCH RESPECTING
OUR LORD'S SECOND COMING.

SOME earnest and faithful Bible student has published a little tract treating the above subject so simply and beautifully that we feel constrained to lay before our readers copious extracts therefrom, as follows:--

No one can read the New Testament with care without discovering that the members of the early Church were men of hope as well as men of faith. Indeed, hope seems, more than faith, to have been the outstanding feature of the character. Not that they really had more of this than that; the twain were one; they formed one noble edifice, one stately ship. But faith was the foundation work; hope, raised upon it, caught the eye of the beholder. Faith lay beneath the water line; hope reared the mast and spread the sail high in the sight of men. Their faith looked back to Calvary; but, in a sense, it was an act completed. They were not always looking backward; forward they peered, with steady gaze. The attitude of expectation was their daily, hourly attitude. Something was about to happen--someone was coming--and they are seen to be on tip-toe, looking for and hasting unto the event. To them it clearly seemed a consummation most devoutly to be wished. They constantly referred to it as "a lively hope," "that blessed hope," "this hope," "one hope," "our hope," "the hope of our calling," "the hope set before us." Every reference shows that it completely filled their hearts, and was the dominating influence in their lives. It almost diverted them from ordinary work and duty, the warning being required not to stand "gazing up into heaven."

The hope thus cherished was not of a private kind, attainable by this believer at a certain time, and that one at another. It was one great hope, to be fulfilled to all the church, not even excluding them that slept, at one defined and selfsame time. "No prophecy of Scripture is of a private interpretation," and this hope, it is evident, was not to be fulfilled to individual believers. It was not a matter of personal and private experience; not the coming of Christ to the individual heart, nor the approach of death to each separate person; but something affecting the entire community of Christians at the same point of time.

I. What was that hope which so controlled and cheered those early saints? None other than "that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." They believed with all their hearts in Jesus Christ, in his wondrous life of miracle and grace, and in his sacrificial death on Calvary's sad tree. They believed that he had triumphed o'er the grave, and had come forth to resurrection life. Many of them had seen him in his resurrection form, and had been witnesses of his ascension to the heavens. They remembered the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said unto them, "I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." They had heard "two men in white apparel" say, "This same Jesus

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which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." With simple faith they all accepted these great promises. The authority appeared to them sufficient, the meaning transparent. The Lord had gone; the Lord would come. He had disappeared from view, but only for "a little while," until the "times of restitution." When these times came, he would appear again, and each one seemed to say, "Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." This was to them the "one far-off Divine event to which the whole creation moves."

IT WAS THE LODESTAR OF THEIR LIFE,

the goal and climax of their being, and round it their communion with each other, like their testimony to the world, continually revolved.

Even if men try, they cannot keep this subject out of sight, so long as the New Testament is read. The late beloved evangelist, D. L. Moody, made the admission that he was originally much opposed to this doctrine, "until," said he, "from constantly meeting with it in the reading of Scripture, I was constrained to become a believer in it; and now it is, to my mind, one of the

most precious truths in the whole Bible." One verse in every thirteen in the New Testament refers to it more or less directly; in the Epistles alone the proportion is much greater, being more like one in ten. In First Thessalonians it is fully one in seven, and in the Second Epistle nearly one in three.

First Thessalonians is usually recognized as the earliest Epistle we possess. In our inquiry now it is of value, then, to note that the belief in Christ's return was a conspicuous feature of the Church to which it was addressed. In the opening chapter the apostle testifies, "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." The second chapter ends with a reference to the prospect of meeting "in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming." At the close of chapter three the prayer is offered. "That he may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." Chapter four finishes with the announcement, made by direct inspiration, that "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." In chapter five the letter is brought to a conclusion with the prayer that they who received it may be "preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In Second Thessalonians there are but forty-seven verses, yet in no fewer than fifteen reference to the Lord's return is made. The apostle declares "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels." He beseeches the brethren to steadfastness "by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." He speaks of "the brightness of his coming," and the "consolation and good hope" it brings; also he prays, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."

First Corinthians is another of the older writings; and it proves that there at Corinth, as at Thessalonica, the Church had taken up the hope of which we speak. "Ye come behind in no gift," says the apostle, "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." He tells them not to sit in judgment upon one another, but to wait "until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart." Above the table where they sit to celebrate the scene on Calvary, he writes the superscription,

"TILL HE COME";

and over all the tombs where sleep the silent saints, he carves the sentence, bringing hope and joy, "Christ the

Firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." Even when the apostle has to utter the dread word "Anathema," he straightway softens it with "Maranatha," "The Lord comes," as though to let them know that, after all, judgment belongeth to another; men need not quickly curse their fellows.

In the Epistle to Philippians the time of the Advent is repeatedly referred to as "The Day of Jesus Christ," and for it they are taught to wait. "He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "That ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ." "That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain." It is clear that the Philippians shared the apostle's hope, because he says, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."

In the Epistle to Colossian saints, the same glad note is rung; "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Everything in the early Church was made to hinge upon the coming of the Lord.

To Timothy, the apostle Paul gives various charges, and he makes each binding "until the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ." In view of the same event he shows that he can hold death in contempt: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

To Titus, too, he makes it clear that, by this truth, not only is the fear of death removed, but life is made pure and beautiful, men "live soberly, righteously, and godly," "looking for that blessed hope."

The Epistle to the Hebrews agrees with all the other apostolic writings. Repeatedly it speaks of the expected day.

"UNTO THEM THAT LOOK FOR HIM

shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." "Consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works...and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." "Cast not away therefore your confidence...for yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

The apostle James adopts the same appeal; "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

The apostle Peter makes much use of Second Advent

truth. It is the vermilion and the gold with which he illuminates his precious manuscripts. To saints in suffering he writes, and thus he seeks to cheer their hearts: "Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith...might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." "Hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." "When his glory shall be revealed, ye shall be glad with exceeding great joy." "When the Chief Shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of life that fadeth not away." "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation....But, beloved, ...the Lord is not slack concerning his promises as some men count slackness,...but the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." "What manner of persons ought ye to be,...looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?" "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

Saint John cherishes the same glad hope, and seeks

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by it to strengthen and to stimulate the Church. "My little children, abide in him, that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is; and every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

As for the Book of the Revelation, it really is the "Revelation of Jesus Christ," and is all about the Second Advent. In it we have the facts, circumstances and judgments connected with the Lord's unveiling, or apocalypse. "Behold he cometh," is the burden of the book; and there can be no understanding of the "words of this prophecy," if the coming of the Lord be doubted, or be lost to view. Again and again, in the midst of its mysteries, the Master's voice is heard crying, "Hold fast till I come!" "Behold I come as a thief;

BLESSED IS HE THAT WATCHETH."

"Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." To this, the seer himself would have us all say, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

It is well for us to scan the Scriptures thus, in order that, by line on line, we may convince ourselves what was the hope that cheered and edified the early Church. After a reading, such as this, there is no room

for doubt regarding it. The hope they had was that of Jesus Christ's return, and nothing else can be maintained as answering to the language they employed.

It could not be a spirit blessing they were looking for--a coming of the Lord into their hearts, for quickening and enlightenment; for such sweet spiritual presence they had never lost. "Lo, I am with you always," he had said, "even to the end of the world"; and evermore "Christ in the heart the hope of glory" was to them a living, grand reality. They did not need a coming of that kind.

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Nor could they mean the destruction of the city of Jerusalem; and passing strange it seems that this should ever have been thought to have fulfilled the prophecy. What was there in this sad event to constitute a hope? It was a hope these men possessed! What had this city's fall to do with Gentile saints? Yet they, as well as Jews, were made partakers of the Church's hope. Above all, why, if the destruction of Jerusalem fulfilled the Scriptures relative to Christ's return--why was the coming of the Lord proclaimed, and eagerly desired, long after Salem's towers were in the dust? The Gospel according to John was surely written after that. So were his three Epistles, and the Book of Revelation. The testimony of the early Fathers is also to the effect that the hope of Christ's return remained, like a meteor in the heavens, long after Jerusalem was removed. Clement of Rome, in his first Epistle, written about A.D. 95, says, "Let us be followers of those who went about in goat skins and sheep skins, preaching the coming of Christ." Ignatius of Antioch, about A.D. 100, wrote to Polycarp, "Be every day better than another; consider the times, and expect him who is above all time, eternal, invisible, though for our sakes made visible." Polycarp, in an Epistle dated about A.D. 108, said, "that God had raised up our Lord Jesus from the dead, and that he will come to judge the world and raise the saints, when if we walk worthy of him we shall reign together with him." Papias of Hierapolis, the intimate friend and companion of Polycarp, taught the coming of the Lord in all the churches that he visited. Justin Martyr, about A.D. 150, spoke of those as "destitute of just reason who did not understand that which is clear from all Scripture, that

TWO COMINGS OF CHRIST ARE ANNOUNCED."

Ireneus also, who flourished as a writer about A.D. 180, says, "The Lord shall come from heaven in the clouds with the glory of his Father, casting the Antichrist and them that obey him into a lake of fire; but bringing to the just the times of the kingdom." These men all, with one accord, waited for the coming of God's Son from

heaven. They did nothing so ridiculous as to believe that the promises to that end were fulfilled when Jerusalem was burned.

Nor was it death for which these early saints were waiting. Not one of them is known to have confounded that with Christ's return. In no epistle is death set before the Christian as the object of his hope. The approach of death, the enemy, can never be the coming of the Lord--his friend. It may be that the time between the hour of death and the morn of resurrection shall pass even as "the twinkling of an eye"; one moment may be heard the voices of earthly friends around the bed, and the next (as it appears) that call that wakes the sleepers in the tomb. But we must carefully distinguish between things that differ. Falling asleep is not the same as waking, though hardly an instant may appear to pass between them; nor is grim death the coming of the Lord, though no time seems to elapse between the two events. If it be otherwise, and the return of Christ means the believer's death, then is the Resurrection "past already," for that is always associated with the Lord's return. But against this heresy we are expressly warned.

No; if Greek and English words have any meaning, those employed by the apostles and the Fathers, with their equivalents in our own mother tongue, all go to show that a personal and glorious coming of the Lord was what those men of God were waiting for. No other coming ever crossed their minds. It was not till the middle of the Third century that serious opposition, or even question, arose as to the doctrine of the personal coming and reign of Jesus Christ. "Now," says Mosheim, "its credit began to decline, principally through the influence and authority of Origen, who opposed it with the greatest warmth, because it was incompatible with some of his favorite sentiments."

The English Baptist churches in their Confession of Faith, presented to Charles II. in 1660, said, "We believe ...that the same Lord Jesus who showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, which was taken up from the disciples and carried into heaven, shall so come in like manner as he was seen to go into heaven, and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory; for then shall he be King of kings and Lord of lords." Here there is quite enough to show what was the hope within them when the early Christians spoke with one another of the coming of the Lord. It was "the Lord himself"--for whom they looked and longed.

II. The reason for such unanimity and enthusiasm in the entertainment of this hope must have been both

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weighty and worthy. The early Christians did not lightly hold it, and it would not be with light and careless

hand they took it up. They must have had as cogent reasons for believing in, and hoping for, their Lord's return, as they possessed for trusting and rejoicing in his first appearing. Back to the first by faith, and forward to the next by hope, they looked, with as solid assurance in one case as in the other. These were the two pivots on which revolved their Christian life, the two wings on which they mounted up as eagles; neither pivot could be weakened, nor could either wing be clipped, without grave injury immediately ensuing. "Take unto you the whole armour of God," said the apostles, and we may be sure they gave as good reasons why the Christian should "take for a helmet the hope of salvation," as for his "putting on the breastplate of faith and love."

The foremost reason must have been, that Christ himself had said he would return. The word of seers and prophets, of apostles and of angels, was of use; and these had all united to affirm that he would come again; but, after all, the Master of the House, rather than any servant, was the One whose word was to be heard. If he said, even once, he would return, that would be quite sufficient for the faithful heart. Already we have seen that many times the

LORD HAD PLEDGED HIS WORD

to this effect. He said distinctly, "If I go...I will come again." "I will come to you." "I go away and come again unto you." He spoke of himself as the "Son of man," who should "come in the glory of his Father"; as the "Nobleman" who "went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return"; as the "Master" for whose coming the servants were to watch; the "Bridegroom," whose appearing the wise virgins all would hail; and as the "Lord" who yet would come and reckon with the stewards of his house. In these, and many ways beside, the gracious Lord assured his loved ones he would come again, and they, with trustful hearts, just took him at his word. "To doubt would be disloyalty, to falter would be sin." Then, as their faith laid hold, their hope was born; for they soon found, wrapped in the promises of his return, as in a garment fair, all scented with sweet lavender, things rare and beautiful, that made those precious promises the richest heirloom of the Christian Church.

The first thing they discovered there was this, that in the certainty of Christ's return there lay the guarantee --the only guarantee they had--that they would see their Lord. Some of those early saints had seen the Saviour when he stood on earth; but now his words were true, "You see me no more." Oh, how they longed to view him once again. To many of them the apostle Peter's words were more appropriate, "Whom having not seen, ye love; and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice." But all the Church

most earnestly desired to look on him whose love had won their hearts. There is evidence that at a very early date the words of Isaiah were appropriated, "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty."

Apart from the Saviour's coming most assuredly there is no warrant given that these anticipations shall be realized. It is then that "every eye shall see him." No wonder that the early Christians "panted for the appointed hour." Then would be the revelation, the unveiling of the Lord; "the day of his appearing and his kingdom;" and till it came they could not be at rest.

WE SHALL BE "CHANGED" AND "SEE HIM AS HE IS."

They also learned to say, "when he shall appear," and "we shall see him as he is," "we shall be like him," "changed into the same image, from glory to glory"; for "as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." This is a marvelous announcement, and hardly could we credit it, unless it were most clearly given in God's most Holy Word. For the assistance of our faith, it is even given repeatedly, and we can only gratefully accept the truth. The early Christians certainly did this.

They believed that this "glad change" in them "which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord," would be accompanied by the awakening of them "which sleep in Jesus." For their dear ones who were dead, as well as for themselves, their only hope lay in the Second Advent. They did not say, "There is no death; what seems so is transition." No, they accepted death as a reality. "We believe that Jesus died," they said, "even so," there are "them also which sleep in Jesus." "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." Still, they are dead, and Resurrection is required to make them live. Not by making light of death did they attempt to comfort one another; but by making much, yea, everything, of the sure and certain hope of joyful Resurrection, to take place at the coming of the Lord. He was the mighty magnet that would yet "descend from heaven," and as steel is drawn to steel, so they declared "the dead in Christ" would rise to him.

They believed that that would be the day of their presentation to the King. By the apostle Paul they were distinctly so informed. In writing to Corinthian

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saints, he said: "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." Until that day, on various grounds, they could not be presented. Christ would not even, until then, be King. So long as he was Priest within the veil, they could not go to him. The type forbade it: "There shall be no man in the tabernacle of

the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out." The Lord himself declared it: "Whither I go ye cannot come." "I will come again and receive you unto myself." For that day of joyful welcome to his court they had to wait. They did not dream of "going to heaven one by one"; they would "be caught up together to meet the Lord." They could not think of entering his glorious presence until they were "presented." They could not be presented until they were prepared and fitly robed. Not in the drab dress of this mortal body could they stand before him. "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." But they believed that when he came this necessary change in their apparel would be wrought; and then should they be brought into the presence of the King in "raiment of needlework and clothing of wrought gold," "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

That would be the time, then, of their triumph and reward. Sometimes when men die their friends

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affirm they have gone to their reward; but

NOT SO SAID THE EARLY CHURCH.

They could not; for the Lord had definitely named another time than that of death: "Thou shalt be recompensed," said he, "at the resurrection of the just"; "in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory." "Behold, I come... and my reward is with me to give every man [then] according as his work shall be." The apostle Peter confirms that with the word, "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory." "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" before reward can be distributed, and we are distinctly told it is at "His appearing" that this seat shall be set up. "Henceforth," said the expiring Paul, "there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." He had no thought of going by himself into the presence chamber, and in some private way receiving his Lord's "welcome" and "well done." No! he wanted "all them, also," whom he had known on earth to be beside him then; especially those whom he had led to taste redeeming love. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" It is when the nobleman returns that he will call his servants, and hold reckoning with them. No wonder, then, that faithful men kept ever in their minds that great event. The coming of the Lord was not denied, nor lost to

view, until, in later days than those of which we speak, the Christian Church had lost its zeal, and in sad, wanton ways was walking with the world.

"Thy kingdom come," he had himself instructed them to pray thus, and they believed that till he came the kingdom would not come. Not for the gradual spread of truth, and the conversion of the world, they looked....They knew that all the purposes of God regarding men would be fulfilled, but they appear not to have thought of that as one. The Gospel must be preached in all the world, 'tis true; but they accepted Christ's own words, that this should be but "for a witness unto all nations"; and as James the apostle said, "to take out of them a people for his name." They did not vainly hope the world would better and yet better grow; they knew that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." They never said that things would so improve that the last days of this dark age would be its brightest and its best. "This know," said they, "that in the last days

PERILOUS TIMES SHALL COME";

for wickedness shall be rampant even with "a form of godliness." With one consent these early Christians waited for the Lord. By his appearing would his kingdom be secured.

Many members of the early Church were Jews, and for their nation's sake they wanted Christ to come. That day would be a glorious day for them, the time of Israel's repentance and recovery. Then "the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth," and from their eyes the veil shall be removed. "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn." "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation."

The thought of Israel's salvation at the Lord's return would make glad the hearts of the Gentile saints as well as Jews; for Israel's restoration, they were told, would girdle the whole globe with the glory of the Lord. "If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?" Then it is that the Lord, by his Advent, "shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel"; then it is, and not in this the Gospel day, that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Then "He shall judge among the nations, and rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks."

Peace shall spread through all the earth,
When the Lord doth come.
Truth and righteousness go forth,
When the Lord doth come.
God with men shall then be found,
Every place be hallowed ground,
Life and beauty shall abound,
When the Lord doth come.

With such results expected from the coming of the King, it is no surprise that it became the early Christian's hope. Each member of the Church seems to have held it. A Christian who had not this hope was an anomaly. Milner says, "This constituted in the second century so decidedly an article of faith that Justin held it up as a criterion of orthodoxy." Bishop Newton says, "It was generally believed in the

FIRST THREE, AND PUREST, AGES [CENTURIES]."

Bishop Russell, though an anti-Millennarian, says, "Down to the beginning of the fourth century the belief was universal and undisputed." While Gibbon, with no prejudice either way, says, "It appears to have been the reigning sentiment of orthodox believers." He also adds, "It was productive of the most salutary effects on the faith and practice of Christians." Of course its effects were salutary! It disposed the Church to prayerfulness and patience, to purity and peace, to sincerity and soberness, to loyalty and love, to fidelity and firmness, to watchfulness and work. Solace it gave in suffering, and in bereavement balm; in persecution perfect peace, and even in the martyr's fire the Master's joy.

Would God this were the Church's hope to-day! Only comparatively few within her bounds lay hold of it. The doctrine of the Second Advent is by most neglected, altho the word of God is full of it.

When not entirely relegated to the lumber room, it is often held up to ridicule, and they who dare to say that they believe in it are treated as--well-meaning folk, perhaps, but--simple souls, and far behind the age. Well, some of us are quite content to be behind the age. Whenever it, in any matter, goes ahead of Jesus Christ and his immediate followers, we shall let it go. "The goodly fellowship of the apostles" is good enough for us, and on the subject now before us we are with that noble company. Simple we may seem to modern men

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to be; but it is the ancient truth we hold, the good old way we tread.

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THE PAROUSIA FIRST--THE EPIPHANIA AND

APOKALUPSIS FOLLOW.

As in the distance the various peaks of the mountain are blended so as to be undiscernible, so in the distance the various features of the Second Advent of our Lord were indistinct. But now is our salvation near-- "nearer than when we first believed"; and we should expect that the holy spirit, which we were assured would bring truth to the attention of the Lord's people as "meat in due season," would continue to "show them things to come" as they would be due to be understood. And thus we have found it, praise the Lord! God's word is as a shining light shining more and more unto the perfect day. In its light we can now see that our Master will be present for a time, in the harvest time of this age--invisibly present doing a work in his church, before any outward sign or revealing to the world takes place. His work in his church will be the separating of the true from the merely nominal --the "wheat" from the "tares." His revealing will be in the "flaming fire" the great time of trouble with which this age will close, and in which the "tares" shall cease to be "tares": but before that fire can come, as the parable was given to show, he will be present in his wheatfield gathering the wheat into the garner and bundling the tares for the burning.

Another parable also shows that before revealing himself in any manner to the world, he calls first his own servants and reckons with them. (Luke 19:15-27.) Ah! dear brethren what a holy awe it brings to our

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hearts to know that we are now living in the presence of the Son of Man; that now the "wheat" is being gathered and the "tares" being bundled;--that now the servants are reporting their use of the pounds and talents entrusted to them, while the world sees nothing and enquires, "Where is the promise of his presence, while all things continue as they were from the beginning?" Nor can any but the few hear and appreciate the evidences, or understand the Master's words that as the world knew not in the days of Noah, even thus shall it be in the presence of the Son of Man (Matt. 24:37) --they shall know not, and the ordinary avocations of daily life shall continue,--until disturbed by the commotion and trouble of the Epiphania, the Apokalupsis of the King in the pouring out of the seven last plagues--when the judgments of the Lord shall be abroad in the earth and the inhabitants of the world shall learn righteousness, and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain [kingdom] of the Lord's house. He shall teach us of his ways and we shall walk in his paths."--Isa. 2:3.

Think up the addresses of all your earnest and pious Christian friends and send them to us for samples of this issue; and if they are interested assure them that if they will request it, mentioning this offer, we will send them a pamphlet on "The Parousia, Epiphania and Apokalupsis of our Lord," free! Call to their attention, also, the still fuller treatment of this subject in "The Time is at Hand," 360 pages, 25c. or loaned free to all who promise a careful reading and to return it postpaid.

"THE MORNING COMETH."

"Lo! from his Eastern heights sublime,
I hear the herald's joyous warning;
Day's glory deepens; far upclimb
The rosy splendors of the morning;
See yon triumphant steeds of light
Chase the retreating hosts of night;
The valleys sing, the hills rejoice,
And sounds aloft one cheering voice,
'Tis coming. Yes, 'tis coming.'

"'Tis coming. Yes, our night of tears
Shall fade before Immanuel's glory,
Which now, to gild our earth, appears,
Foretold in ancient song and story;
Foretold in that seraphic strain,
With notes which haunt our world again,
For traveling through the shadowy years,
The Just, the Merciful appears.
Behold! the Lord of glory."

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FURTHER OBSTACLES TO THE "DAWNS."

WHEN UNLAWFULLY cut off from the cheap rates for mailing the paper-covered Dawns, we did the next best thing, and availed ourselves of the special rates granted on this class of matter, in ten pound lots, by the Express Companies. Thus we have been enabled, up till now, to send the Dawns, in packs of ten or more, to any Express office in the United States at the rate of thirteen cents per volume.

But now this, too, is changed. The Express Companies, finding us at their mercy; have adopted the same rule as the Post Office. Undoubtedly they would be willing to raise their rates on books and

everything--just as high as Post Office competition will permit.

In view of these facts, we have been obliged to increase the wholesale rates on Dawns. It may be argued that the increased price will make no difference to us, as the Dawns are sold at cost anyway; but we answer that our object is to put as large a number into circulation as possible--hoping that, by and by, they will be more sought and more studied by the masses than now;--and we well know that the lower the cost the more can be circulated.

We propose meeting the issue by supplying our readers with the cloth-bound Dawns (prepaid to any part of the world) for twenty-five cents per volume. By having the binding done in very large quantities we hope to nearly get out whole; but if at a slight loss we will consider it money well spent in the wider circulation of the truth.

One good result will be the better appearance the books will make, wherever they may go; another, their greater durability; and, additionally, they will appear more frequently on the bookshelf, and thus become the better known. Order hereafter in cloth binding.

The retail price of Dawns will hereafter be 35 cents, plus postage, 10 cents; but all Watch Tower subscribers are welcome to the wholesale rate as above.

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STEPHEN'S DEFENCE AND EXECUTION

--ACTS 7:54-8:2--MARCH 2.--

Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."--Matt. 5:44.

STEPHEN'S defence before the Sanhedrin Court turned out to be a defence of the truth, rather than of himself. Full of zeal for the Lord and for a proper use of his privileges as a minister of the truth, Stephen was courageous--seemingly to the extent of ignoring all thought of personal safety. His defence is not part of this lesson, but it is, nevertheless, worthy of consideration. It displays a clear insight into the past history of his people, and a clear appreciation of the lessons inculcated through their experiences. In a word, it gives evidence that Stephen was a Bible student--"a workman who needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Stephen in all this was a worthy example to the Lord's flock, the lesson still being appropriate. With us also the first thought should be the privilege of serving the truth, and if the

will of God be such, the privilege of laying down life, even, in its service. A full consecration to the Lord on our part, and a keen appreciation of the truths of the Scripture, will ultimately make us courageous--not careful for the present life when weighed in the balances with the interests of the Lord's cause. But now, as in Stephen's day, such courage can only come from a knowledge of the divine plan, and the knowledge can only come through a right dividing of the word of truth;--and such abilities imply a devotion of time and energy to the study of truth, and the guidance of the holy spirit in the understanding of it.

The charge against Stephen was blasphemy against the holy place, Jerusalem (and especially its holy Temple, which sanctified it), and against the law of Moses. Passing by the charges, Stephen went into a history of the Lord's leading of Israel from the time of Abraham down to his own time; and thus showed his full faith in the holy places and in the promises and presence of God, which made them holy. His familiarity with the facts, and the reverent manner in which he stated them, and the conclusions which he drew from them, must have shown his judges clearly that so far from being a blasphemer of Moses and his institutions and holy things, he was a firm believer in these, and a zealous advocate of them. So with us: when discussing holy things there may at times be those who, intentionally or ignorantly, will attribute to us evil conditions or evil motives. With us, as with Stephen, the best manner of dealing with such charges is to show, without ostentation, and by deeply reverent manner, that we are trusting implicitly in the gracious promises of God, and that we appreciate fully his various providential leadings and dealings in the past, not only as respects ourselves, but with all his holy people. Now, as in Stephen's case, the best answer respecting our fidelity to the holy things is represented in our knowledge of them, and in the reverent manner in which we mention them.

Stephen rehearsed to his hearers the fact that Moses, the great Law-giver, whom they now revered, had at one time been rejected by Israel, saying, "Who made thee a judge or a ruler over us?" But he was God's agent and representative, and hence, in due time, he became Israel's deliverer. He reminded them also that Moses had said, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me." The lesson which Stephen desired his hearers to draw is, that as Moses was rejected at his first offering to the Israelites so the one like unto Moses would, like him, be rejected--had been rejected, in the person of Jesus. Nevertheless, as Moses subsequently became the leader and commander of the people, and delivered them, so also Jesus would in due time become the great deliverer of his people,--at his second advent. He pointed further to the fact that the prophets all down through the Jewish age had been refused by the

people in the time of their presence and ministry with

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them, many of them being foully dealt with; but nevertheless subsequently they were discerned to have been the Lord's representatives. Stephen would have his hearers recognize Christ as the great prophet, whom God had set forth to be the instructor of the people. We see no attempt to defend himself, except by showing up the truth. He evidently relied upon his course of conduct and teaching corroborating the history which he was now delineating. Let us also, in our intercourse with others whom we would lead into the truth, pay less attention to self-defence than to a presentation of the divine Word. As the Apostle declares, the sword of the spirit, the Word of God, is sharper than any two-edged sword.--Heb. 4:12.

About this time, apparently, some manifestation of impatience on the part of the Court caused Stephen to hasten to his conclusions abruptly, saying, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the holy spirit; as your fathers did so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted, and they have slain them which showed before the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers; who have received the law by the dispensation of angels, and have not kept it." (Vss. 51-53.) It is not necessary to suppose that these simple, true words were uttered in any harsh tone or strifeful manner; for everything about Stephen's attitude seems to imply gentleness, forbearance, love. It was the truth, and it was the right time to tell it. He evidently knew what was likely to be the result anyway, and wished to give his testimony, that as those who had foretold the just one had been killed it was no more remarkable that those who afterward bore witness to him should be killed also.

His persecutors were thwarted; their attempt to traduce him and show him an enemy of the Lord, of the nation, and of the law, had abundantly failed. He stood before the Sanhedrin a great teacher, reproofing them, and showing from their own Scriptural records that they were now intent on doing toward him as their fathers had done toward the Lord's faithful in every age. His hearers were "cut to the heart." This expression reminds us of the record (Acts 2:37) of those who heard Peter preach on the same theme--they were "pricked to the heart." But people can be pricked to the heart, and yet have very different results follow. Much will depend upon what is in the heart when it is pricked. If it be good the results will be good; if it be evil the results will be evil. Out of the abundance of

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the heart the mouth speaks, and the course of action is guided. These men were in a wicked condition of heart, and the truths uttered by Stephen were to them stings, rebukes, arousing their hatred to a pitch of frenzy-- "they gnashed on him with their teeth."

Undaunted by their manifestations of hatred and malice, Stephen was so filled with an appreciation of the Lord's goodness, and of his being a servant of the truth, that he was all aglow with interest in his theme, and his face illuminated with an angelic expression, such as the truth only can impart. It was then that looking away from his own surroundings--away from his enemies' faces--he was granted a glimpse of the Lord at the right hand of the Father. Whether it was a mental vision, such as any of us can awaken in our minds, such as the Apostle referred to when he said that we should be continually "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith," or whether it was actually a vision granted to Stephen at this particular time, we know not;--most probably it was a vision.

He of course did not see in reality what he described, as that would be an impossibility;--"No man hath seen God at any time," and the Only Begotten of the Father is now the express image of his person, and he also would be invisible to humanity; even the light of his glory would have smitten Stephen down, as it smote Saul of Tarsus a short time afterward. But that Stephen should have had a vision or revelation of his Master and his high exaltation is entirely reasonable; he told what he saw, and this furnished the occasion of his death. His adversaries could have found nothing against him in anything he had said, or that any witness could have proved, but now, affecting great indignation at the thought that Jesus, whom they had crucified, Jesus the imposter, had become exalted to heavenly glory, next to Jehovah himself--this furnished an opportunity for the claim that Stephen was a blasphemer, and therefore ought to be stoned to death. All being in a wrong attitude of heart, the same impulse affected all, and they rushed upon the faithful servant of the truth, pushing him out of the city to a secluded spot, where they stoned him to death. Let us likewise be faithful to the Lord, and we also shall have revelations of our Lord's glory--not, probably, visions or dreams, but such mental pictures as are clearly delineated before us in God's Word, which now is commonly in the hands of his people; and under the leadings of the holy spirit reveals to us the deep things of God which human eyes have not seen nor ears heard.--I Cor. 2:10,13.

The stoning of Stephen would seem to have been a violation of the Roman law. The Mosaic law, indeed, commanded stoning as a penalty for blasphemy; but from the time the Romans took possession of the country they seem to have decreed that life could not be taken in any legal form except that of the Roman law; but Stephen's enemies were so enraged that they were

evidently willing to risk some personal injury rather than be defeated in their purpose of destroying their enemy, whom they could not match with Scripture or logic.

The Lord's servants to day are in no particular danger of being stoned to death after the same manner; but the majority of them have had experiences, nevertheless, which in many respects correspond. False representations, anger, malice, hatred, strife, etc., hurled against the Lord's people, are often hard to bear; and yet all those who receive such figurative stoning in the same manner that Stephen received his literal stoning, are sure to be greatly blessed. They find that although such experiences are severe as respects the flesh, they are nevertheless helpful, profitable, as respects the new nature. They thus demonstrate the truth of the Apostle's statement, "The outward man perisheth, but the inward man is renewed day by day,"--by just such experiences rightly received.

It is here that attention is drawn to the fact that Saul of Tarsus was probably a member of the Sanhedrin, which tried Stephen, and surely one of those who consented to his death;--standing guard over the outer garments of those who executed the will of the Sanhedrin, in doing the actual stoning. He refers to the matter himself subsequently, in contrite language. (Acts 22:20.) Let us have hope, therefore, that some of those who today assault us, because of loyalty to the Lord and his Word, may yet be amongst those who will penitently acknowledge the error of their ways. Indeed, a number of instances of this kind have occurred; a number of those who are now deeply interested in present truth at one time were so bitterly opposed that they burned the publications which represent these truths, and gloried in the deed. It shows us, too, how God looks at the heart, and teaches us that some who are not bad at heart may at times be so blinded by prejudice that light appears darkness to them and darkness light.

Stephen's attitude in receiving his persecution was most noble. He prayed for himself and for his enemies--that the latter might be forgiven, so far as he was concerned;--they will have enough to answer for and to receive "stripes" or just retribution. For himself, that the Lord would receive his spirit. There has been some query as to what would be implied in this expression, "Receive my spirit." We have already shown* that the primary sense of the word spirit is energy or "life," and that the spirit, energy or life, of all flesh was forfeited through sin; but that believers, recognizing the fact that Christ has died for our sins, recognizing the fact also that whosoever accepts Christ, as his Redeemer, receives through him a new right to life--that to such the spirit of life is no longer reckoned as forfeited, but reckoned as being restored to them again,--and that unto eternal life, if they are faithful. Not that

Christians are privileged to retain their hold upon the spirit of life now, and thus avoid dying, but that God has promised us, through his Word, that he who has the Son has life--has received back again by faith through him a future right to life, to be fully attained through a resurrection. Nevertheless, it is explained to us that "our life is hid with Christ in God," and will not be ours until "he who is our life shall appear" at his Second advent,--and grant, according to the Father's plan, new or resurrection bodies to his people. (Col. 3:3,4.) Stephen meant to express to the Lord his confidence, his trust, in a future life through a resurrection, when he made this expression, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"--receive my life, preserve my life, that it may be granted to me again in the resurrection, according

*MILLENNIAL DAWN, Vol. V., Chap. 13.

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to thy gracious promise: I commit my all to thee, in hope.

Stephen's attitude under persecution may well commend itself to us: our love for the Lord and our benevolent sympathy with all the gracious features of his plan should lift us above any and everything like vindictiveness or spitefulness against our enemies; and should permit us to see that their mistreatment of us, is largely because they are blind to the truth. They know not us, even as they knew not the Lord; and, as he said, if they called the Master of the house Beelzebub, and said all manner of evil against him falsely, we must not be surprised if the same should be our lot. We know, therefore, to count it all joy when we fall into such matters; and should rejoice that we are counted worthy of a share with the Lord in the trials and difficulties of this present time, that in due time we

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may be made partakers also of the glory to follow. With us also the one thought should be the pleasing of our Lord and the attainment, through him, of the life everlasting --having him to care for our spirit of life, and to revive us again in the resurrection in due time.

"HE FELL ASLEEP."

In the midst of his prayer he fell asleep--he died. Commenting on these words an "orthodox" writer says: "Tho the pagan authors sometimes used sleep to signify death, it was only a poetic figure. When Christ, on the other hand, said, 'Our friend, Lazarus, sleepeth,' he used the word, not as a figure but as an expression

of a fact. In that mystery of death in which the pagan saw only nothingness, Jesus saw continued life, rest, waking--the elements which enter into sleep. And thus in Christian speech and thought, as the doctrine of the resurrection struck its roots deeper, the word 'dead,' with its hopeless finality, gave place to the more gracious and hopeful word, 'sleep.' The pagans' burying place carried in its name no suggestion of hope or comfort. It was a burying place, a hiding place, monumentum, a mere memorial of something gone; ...but the Christian thought of death as sleep brought with it, in the Christian speech, the kindred thought of a chamber of rest, and embodied it in the word cemetery--the place to lie down to sleep"-- Word Studies.

Throughout the Scriptures the word "sleep" is frequently used as a synonym for death--but only in view of the hoped-for awakening--the resurrection. It was because Abraham and his posterity believed God that he was able to raise them up from the dead, and that his agreement so to do was implied in the promise that all the families of the earth should be blessed, that it was impossible for them to think of their departed ones as being totally extinct in death;--from that time onward sleep, as a synonym of death, became common amongst those who waited for the consolation of Israel. And in New Testament times, in harmony with our Lord's declaration, "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth," and again, "Lazarus sleepeth," etc., we have the term sleep commonly used amongst the followers of Jesus in the various New Testament writings. (See Matt. 9:24; John 11:11.) Many, however, who use the term sleep, and who place it upon the tombstones in their cemeteries, overlook entirely the fact that it implies that the sleeping one is unconscious, that he will not be conscious until the waking time, the resurrection. The figure is a beautiful one, viewed from the right standpoint, the standpoint of divine revelation, which shows us the blessings of mankind, restitution, which are to be expected as soon as the morning of the new Millennial day shall have been fully ushered in.

Doubtless there were many who considered the martyrdom of Stephen a great calamity to the Church, a great loss of influence; a cutting off of one of the ablest exponents of the gospel. But we are not sure that they took a correct view. Viewed from God's standpoint, quite possibly the testimony which Stephen gave at the close of his life was a most beneficial one; first in its influence upon the believers, in teaching them by precept and example faithfulness, even unto death; and that the Lord's people could die as they lived,--joyful through the faith that is in Christ. His death also probably bore a valuable witness to some of his enemies. Quite possibly the Apostle Paul's first favorable impressions toward Christianity were received through his witness of the courage and zeal of this

noble martyr,--whose spirit of Christ he doubtless witnessed in others of the hated "sect, everywhere spoken against."

So with us; we know not which act in life may glorify the Lord most, or whether our living or dying would be most helpful to his cause. We are to leave this in the Lord's hands, and to remember that our course in any event must be one of faithfulness, and that if faithful nothing can by any means harm us, but all things must work together for our good.

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PERSECUTION AND ITS GOOD FRUIT.

--ACTS 8:3-13.--MARCH 9.--

"Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere, preaching the Word."

PERSECUTION is never right, nor is it a joyous matter; nevertheless, God can overrule this, as well as all wrongs, for the good of his people, who can learn also the lessons of "rejoicing in tribulation," and of tracing divine providences through them,--seeing by faith the desirable results. The first persecution of the Church began about the time of Stephen's death, noted in our last lesson. This is variously estimated as having been from three to seven years after the day of Pentecost, tho we have no means of definite information. Saul of Tarsus (afterward called Paul the Apostle), was evidently a leader in the heresy-hunting and persecution which started with Stephen and extended in a general way to all believers,--except the apostles, who, for some reason, seem to have been providentially protected.

The persecution began in Jerusalem, because this so far had been the center of the work, as our Lord had directed,--"beginning at Jerusalem." Not only was it the principal city of Palestine, but, as we have previously seen, it was the resort of pious Jews from all quarters of the world, many of whom sought to make it their home in the close of life, even if they

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had previously lived abroad. The Lord had graciously granted a season of development for those brought into the Church at Pentecost, and subsequently; and now that they had reached a fair degree of growth in grace and in knowledge, he permitted the winds of persecution to blow against the Church, and to scatter the ripened seeds hither and

thither, in every direction.

The same God who directed thus in the affairs of the early Church still loves and cherishes his own; still directs and guides in respect to the interests of his own cause, his Zion. Now, as then, it is with him to permit or to hinder persecution, according as in his wisdom would be for the best interests of his people, and the outworking of his glorious plans. The persecution which then arose had, doubtless, a twofold effect (1) It served to test and to sift those who had already named the name of Christ;--to prove their loyalty, their willingness to endure hardness as good soldiers;--their worthiness to be reckoned amongst the overcomers. Not only did it test them, but it undoubtedly strengthened them; for experience shows us that every trial and test endured with faithfulness brings an increase of victory and strength of character. (2) It became the Lord's means of spreading the truth in every direction, and thus of greatly broadening, as well as deepening, his work in the world. Having first blessed those who, by his providential arrangements, had been gathered to one center, he now scattered them, as lights throughout Palestine and the adjacent country.

Drawing applications to ourselves from this feature of our lesson, we note how the Lord has gathered to this new land, America, a specially prepared class of people, liberty-lovers and truth-lovers, from all parts of the world. We note how he has lighted the torch of liberty and civilization here more generally than elsewhere. We note how, in this specially prepared soil, he has planted the present truth, the "harvest" message which is now shining forth in a feeble manner, not only to all the people of this favored land, but, to the world in general. We note a correspondency, also, in the fact that thus far in this harvest our persecutions have been quiet,--rather than public, open, and demonstrative. We like the early Church, have had an excellent opportunity for cultivating the knowledge of the truth and the graces of the holy spirit. Surely it will not surprise us now, or shortly, if the Lord's providence would permit some open persecution; and if this should be the divine will, are we in that proper condition of heart that it would profit, instead of discourage us, and destroy our faith? Would it mean to us, as to the faithful of the early Church, merely an enlargement of our opportunities, and the broadening of the Lord's work today? We trust it would be so.

An important lesson for all of the Lord's people to learn, is that the Lord himself has full charge and direction of the affairs of his Church; that he who blesses it with his holy spirit, and with the light of the knowledge of God, is the same one who has permitted a restraining of the persecutions and siftings from without and from within. Those who

learn this lesson thoroughly are the only ones who, amid all the affairs of life, can rest themselves fully in "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." Let us learn to trace divine providences in the past, and to appreciate them and to apply them as far as possible, to affairs of the present time; and then to trust the Lord, even where we cannot trace him, knowing that all things shall work together for good to them that love him.

HOW TYNDALE'S PERSECUTION RESULTED.

As an illustration of how persecutions sometimes, indeed generally, greatly prosper the cause of truth, note the following respecting that eminent English reformer, William Tyndale, who was

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amongst the first to publish the holy Scriptures in the English language. Not being permitted to do his work of Bible translating in Great Britain, he removed to the city of Worms, Germany, and published there his first complete edition of the New Testament. Several hundred copies of the work went to England. These, by order of King Henry VIII., were bought up for destruction, by the Bishop of London; but Tyndale read the meaning of this providential hindrance of the circulation of the work thus: "I shall get money of him for these books to buy myself out of debt, and the whole world shall cry out at the burning of God's Word; and the over-plus of money shall help me to correct again, and nearly to imprint the same." And so it was. Bishop Tunstall purchased not only all he could secure in Great Britain, but also purchased copies in the city of Antwerp, and had a public burning of these at St. Paul's Cross, London, A.D. 1526. Later on, in spite of the prohibitions of the king, and the energy of the clergy, copies of the New Testament, published in the English language, were smuggled in by vessels laden with grain.

What we all need is implicit trust in God and a burning zeal for the service of the truth, which nothing can daunt or hinder. If thwarted in one way we are to adopt another plan. If hindered in that, to change again--always observing the laws and principles of righteousness, and relying upon the Lord to overrule the results to his own praise. Under the Lord's providence hundreds of thousands of copies of Millennial Dawn and millions of tracts have been scattered as seed in all civilized lands. It would not surprise us at all if some persecution or opposition were to arise which would

cause these seeds of truth to germinate. The man who, in his anger, stamped his feet upon the seeds, merely pressed them into the earth, where they the better took root. And so it may be in respect to any opposition which the great Adversary may raise up now, and which the Lord may permit. We may not pray for temptations, trials and persecutions, nor may we pray to escape them; but it is surely our privilege to ask that the Lord will not abandon us in temptation, but will ultimately deliver us from the Evil One--in his own time and way--and generally, to overrule our affairs to his own praise.

DEACON PHILIP'S MINISTRY.

There was a Philip amongst the twelve apostles, but it is not he that is referred to in this lesson. This Philip was one of the seven deacons whose choice

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by the Church has been related. (Acts 6:5.) Evidently he had used well the opportunities thus afforded him, by attending not only to the distribution of the natural food to the needy, but by the feeding of his own heart upon the spiritual food also,--thus preparing himself, as a servant and messenger of the Lord, for further service of a more spiritual kind. Philip was one of those whom the persecution drove out of Jerusalem. Let us stop here to notice that the early Church might have said,--Persecution is getting severe; but we will stay where we are, suffer imprisonment, etc., esteeming that the Lord is able to protect us here as well as elsewhere. This would have been sound reasoning; but it would indicate a neglect of the Lord's directions to his Church, saying, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." (Matt. 10:23.) The persecution was intended to scatter them, and failure to take heed to the Lord's directions might have led some of the most earnest and faithful of the Church to obstinately resist the designs of providence. So now, let those who may be called upon to endure persecution remember the Lord's direction; and after giving a proper testimony, if the door of opportunity opens, let them remove to another locality, where their faithfulness and increased knowledge and wisdom in the handling of "the sword of the spirit" may give them opportunities for still greater usefulness. This was the case with Philip, who removed to Samaria, and apparently lost no time in beginning the ministry of the truth, preaching Christ.

It will be remembered that this city of Samaria was the capital of a district called Samaria, whose

people were known as Samaritans; being of mixed blood, Jewish and Gentile, they were counted by the Jews as though they were Gentiles; hence "the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans." We remember, further, that it was respecting these people that our Lord said to his disciples, when sending them forth, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matt. 10:5,6; 15:24.) Our Lord thus marked the Samaritans as being separate and distinct from the Israelites. We remember, further, that it was because our Lord would not enter into the City of Samaria, and heal its sick, that the people of that city refused to sell the disciples food, as they passed by. It was in resenting this affront that James and John, the apostles, said to our Lord, "Wilt thou that we command fire from heaven to consume their city?" Jesus answered, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of; the Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." It was a woman from this same city who later met the Lord at the well, and got from him a little taste of the water of life, then brought many of her friends and neighbors, who also tasted and were refreshed, and many of them believed on him. Nevertheless, our Lord's testimony then was, "Ye worship ye know not what;...salvation is of the Jews."--John 3: Luke 9:54-56; John 4:22.

The fact that Philip now came into Samaria, under the leading of divine providence, and preached the gospel there, signifies that the time had come for the gospel to be extended beyond Judaism. It implies, therefore, that this incident occurred at least three and a half years after our Lord's death--after the close of the seventieth symbolical week, and the full end of Israel's special favor as respects the gospel invitation of this age. Evidently the apostles had less strenuous feelings of opposition against the Samaritans than against Gentiles in general, because they were of mixed Jewish blood.

The Samaritans were ripe for the gospel, and the fact that the Jews had disdained them much as they did the Gentiles no doubt made them all the more ready to receive the gospel message, which ignored all caste and class distinction, and accepted into its brotherhood all who confessed their sins, accepted Jesus as the Redeemer, and made full consecration to him. Philip's preaching was backed by the open manifestations of the spirit, in healings, etc., as was all the preaching of that time--intended to establish the faith, and to counteract the wonder-workings of Satan, through necromancers, those possessed of a spirit of divination, etc.

The truth reached the Samaritans just in time to rescue them from some of Satan's wily arts, known at that time as "Black Art," etc., practiced by Simon

Magus, the sorcerer. The record is, that his influence with the people had been great, both with rich and poor; and that they recognized him as possessed of "the great power of God." Times have changed since then; sorcery and magic no longer captivate the world to the same extent, and the great deceiver has changed his tactics with the times. As the Apostle declares, he assumes a garment of light, and presents himself as a messenger of light, for the deception of those who are seeking the truth. Today he has a variety of devices, snares and traps for those who are awaking out of the slumbers of gross superstition and ignorance brought down from the dark ages. To these he variously presents himself as a Higher Critic, searching for the truth in the Bible, and finding it a mass of contradiction. To others he appears as an Evolutionist, teaching doctrine wholly contradictory to that of the Scriptures, proving that there was no fall; and hence that there could be no redemption from a fall, no times of restitution from its consequences. To others he appears as a Christian Scientist, affecting the name of Christ as one deception, and the name of Science as another, and presenting a confused medley opposed to both--yet backed, nevertheless, by certain physical reliefs and cures distributed (by the same power which worked through Simon Magus) to those who will yield themselves to the deception, and who will deny the truth and persistently stick to the denial;--they shall have the reward of healing.

We who now oppose the Adversary and his methods are not armed with the powers of physical healing, whereby to appeal to the people; but we are possessed of the truth, which operates as an eyesalve upon the eyes of the understanding of those who accept;--as a cleansing from sin and a relief from burdens;--as the oil of joy upon their heads and in their hearts. The whole matter has taken a higher plane, by reason of the advancement in general knowledge and civilization which have come to the world as a result of the shining of the light

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through God's faithful ones in the past. Now, as then, the truth brings conviction to those who are in a proper attitude of heart, and relieves them from the bondage of ignorance, superstition, priestcraft, and sectarianism,--bringing them into the liberty wherewith Christ makes free indeed all who become truly his.

Those who accepted Philip's message, and made a consecration to the Lord, signified it by baptism--immersion--in water, symbolizing the immersion (burial) of their wills into the will of God as expressed in Christ;--signifying that henceforth they would be

dead to self and to the world, and rise to walk in newness of life, as members of the body of Christ. We read nothing about a creed or a sect or a denominational name, nor about the recording of the names in a denominational register. The early Church recognized, as we do, that the important matter is that believers should be joined to Christ, and that their names, on this account, should be "written in heaven." Simon, who had previously been the religious(?) leader of the people--their leader into darkness, into the wiles of the Adversary,--became one of Philip's converts, one of those immersed, and a constant attendant upon Philip's ministry, beholding with amazement the power of God operating through him, which power he recognized as being superior to the power of Satan which had operated in himself.

News of God's favor to the Samaritans, and of their acceptance of the Lord, soon reached Jerusalem; and representatives of the whole company of the apostles and others at Jerusalem, went down to Samaria to note the work of the Lord, and, no doubt, to encourage the believers. But they went specially because the gifts of the holy spirit (miracles, healings, tongues, etc.) could only be communicated through the apostles. However well Philip might proclaim the gospel and immerse believers, he, not being one of the chosen twelve, had not the power of communicating those gifts. (As those gifts were communicated only by the apostles it is evident that they must have ceased in the Church shortly after the apostles died.) Peter was one of those sent, and John, the very one who had said, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire from heaven, to destroy these men and their city?" was the other delegate. How much change the Gospel of Christ had wrought, even in this good man! He had learned of Jesus, and now had the same spirit, which sought not to destroy men's lives but to save them.

When the apostles arrived they prayed with the disciples, and then laid their hands upon them, communicating some of the gifts,--power to speak with tongues, to interpret tongues, to perform miracles, etc. As Simon Magus was one of the believers, one of the baptized ones, he, with the rest, undoubtedly received some gift of the holy spirit. Yet he, and quite probably others of the number, were not in full harmony with the Lord and his gracious plans. The gifts of the spirit might be imparted instantaneously; but the fruits of the spirit could only be had by growth. Those gifts, therefore, are not to be esteemed as being such good evidence of the divine favor, and nearness to the Lord, as are the fruits of the spirit, which all of the Lord's consecrated people of today should possess in some degree,--meekness, patience, gentleness, brotherly kindness, love. The

Apostle Paul declares that if he had not merely one of those gifts, but all of them, yet lacked love, it would profit him nothing, eventually, as respects the great favor to which the Lord has called his Church. --I Cor. 13:1-8.

Simon Magus, while astonished with what he had seen, and interested from that standpoint, and convinced that the power was a holy one; and although he had cast in his lot with the believers, and received a gift,--was still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity," as the Apostle Peter subsequently told him. He was thus all the time, but neither recognized the fact himself, nor did the others recognize it. It was then that his interest in the matters under consideration led him to the point of asking Peter to give him the apostolic power of communicating gifts; promising him in return a good compensation in money;--thus showing that he was not interested in the truth and its service from the right standpoint;--that his was merely a curiosity interest, and that selfishness had not given place to love; that he would like to have this apostolic power so that he could use it in a selfish way, for his own aggrandizement, and for his own advantage amongst the people.

There have been many of this same disposition since. They are not necessarily worse men than many others in the world, because they give evidence that they have neither part nor lot with the Lord's people. It is safe to say that there are hundreds of thousands, yes, millions, of the Simon Magus class in the nominal churches of today; men and women who have never discerned the real spirit of the gospel; but who look at its various arrangements from a mercenary point of view, considering what shall be the gain or loss, the advantage or disadvantage, of their relationship thereto;--and maintaining the relationship because of the honor or social position or worldly prosperity which it has brought them, or is bringing them, or which they hope yet to obtain through it. To all such we would like to say, kindly but firmly, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter." We would not say, nor did Peter say to Simon, Your day of grace is past, and you shall be eternally tormented. What God may have for such in the future, under different conditions, we may or may not see clearly; but the point which we are now noting is that such characters have no share in the Kingdom; neither in its present, nor in its future development. Even amongst those who have received present truth, we have reason to fear that some have received it, not in the love of it, but merely in a spirit of curiosity; or with a view to having something which they can use as a means for bringing themselves into some place of prominence amongst the brethren. Such persons are dangerous characters--

dangerous as respects themselves, and dangerous as respects their influence in the Church. Such should be carefully avoided in the selection of leaders amongst the Lord's people, no matter what their natural gifts, riches, or talents may be.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

BELIEVERS, AND THE BANKRUPTCY ACT.

Question: Would it be right or wrong for the footstep-followers of our Lord Jesus Christ to take advantage of the Bankruptcy Act for the relief of Insolvent Debtors?

Answer: It would be entirely proper for any person to take advantage of the law. The thought which lies back of this law is that in the vicissitudes of life some persons become hopelessly insolvent, and that it is the proper thing for their neighbors to relinquish their hold upon them and let them have a fresh start in life, provided they give up all that they have to their creditors. This humane law reminds us strikingly of the divine law given to Israel, and represented in their Jubilee system, under which, every fiftieth year, all debts of every kind were cancelled, and each family inheritance was restored; and that, we again remember, is but a type, or illustration of the heavenly Father's dealings with the world of mankind, who are all his debtors, and who, by application to the Mediator of the New Covenant, will be granted shortly immunity from every previous debt, and opportunity to retrieve their fortunes and to build new characters, without prejudice from original sin and condemnation.

While it would be lawful and proper enough for you to avail yourself of the privileges of this Bankruptcy Act, it may not be convenient for you to do so, because it would require some considerable attorney's fees to put the matter through, and unless you have some purpose or object respecting this in the future that would make it worth while to have the docket cleared and to permit you to go into some kind of business, you had, perhaps, better let the matter stand as it is.

The general principle is a correct one, that the world of mankind are, in a general sense, human brothers, and that they should not oppress one another, but be ready to forgive one another their debts,

when the circumstances are such that the debtor is unable to meet the obligations, and when he will probably never be able to meet them without unjustly depriving his family of life's necessities. In harmony with this thought is the general law of civilized lands, that debts are not perpetual, but that at the expiration of five years they become void and legally dead, unless specially stated to the contrary by the recording of them as judgments. However, on the other hand, should anyone living in debt come into possession of wealth, so that he could pay his obligations, it should be his pleasure to pay them, whether he had taken advantage of the Bankruptcy Act or not.

THE GARMENT SPOTTED WITH THE FLESH.

Question: What is meant by the Apostle in the statement, "Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23)?

Answer: The garment to be worn by Christians is the robe of Christ's righteousness, the spotless robe which is given to those who come unto the Father. All who have love for the Lord and for righteousness will desire to maintain as far as possible this absolute perfection of righteousness imputed to them through faith. To do this they will seek to walk after the spirit, and not after the flesh. But notwithstanding their good desires they may not infrequently come short of the glory of God, and fail to live up to all even of their opportunities. All such shortcomings of every kind are reckoned as stains or spots on the imputed garment of Christ's righteousness--spots, marks of

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fleshly weakness. Those who have the right attitude of heart will hate sin, and hence will hate all fleshly spots or weaknesses of every kind, and will make haste to take the matter to the Lord in prayer, and, so far as possible, to make good any wrong they may have committed, even though unwilfully done; and thus under the New Covenant the blood of Christ cleanses such from all sins, and in this manner they are able to keep themselves unspotted from the world. By and by this faithful class will experience the resurrection change, and being possessed of new bodies in full accord with their new minds they will thenceforth be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

From this it will be plain that none need have spots upon his garment except he be careless respecting the matter; and such as are thus careless are to that extent lacking of the Master's spirit--they are not overcomers of the world, but to some extent sympathize

with sin. This is the class which, for this reason, will fail to be accounted overcomers and will fail to obtain the great prize of joint-heirship in the kingdom. This is the class which will be obliged to go through the great tribulation with which this age will close, to the intent that in that tribulation they may learn lessons which will be valuable to them to all eternity, and this learning of lessons is scripturally called "washing their robes, and making them white in the blood of the Lamb."--Rev. 7:14.

WITH SUCH AN ONE NO, NOT TO EAT.

Question: What about I Cor. 5:11? "With such an one no, not to eat."

Answer: We understand the Apostle to refer to Church relationships, and that the Lord's people are in duty bound to maintain a very high standard of purity of morals; so much so that they would not even fellowship in the Church or at the common meal or love-feast with any who were known positively to be of disreputable character. This would not mean one against whom merely an evil thought had been encouraged; or one against whom the shaft of slander had been hurled; for other Scriptures show us distinctly that the Lord's people are not to be evil surmisers in their carefulness to maintain a high standard of Christian living. Verse 10 seems to indicate that in our social and business affairs we should to a reasonable degree avoid fellowships and dealings with the disreputable.

IS GOD THE FATHER OF ALL MEN?

Question: The Apostle, in Acts 17:29, seems to speak of the natural man as the offspring of God. How should we understand this?

Answer: God represents himself as the Life-giver, or Father of every living thing, since all life proceeds from him; but, specially, he is the Father, or Life-giver of all created in his likeness. The natural man was thus created, represented in Adam;

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and although much of that original likeness has since been lost through sin and depravity, it is, nevertheless, still proper to speak of the man from the standpoint of his original creation. It is to be remembered, however, that according to the Scriptures all in the transgression lost the standing of sonship. All are God's offspring, that is, all spring from, or derive

their life from the Almighty; but he recognizes as sons only those who are in harmony, in fellowship with him, and this now includes only those who are reconciled through the precious blood.

GOD COMMANDETH ALL MEN EVERYWHERE TO REPENT.

Question: In the 30th and 31st verses of the same chapter we seem to have a contradiction. Verse 30 declares that God "commandeth all men everywhere to repent," and verse 31 declares that the appointed day for the world's judgment is future. If the judgment of the world has not yet begun, in what sense and with what justice does God command all everywhere to repent now?

Answer: While the command to repent is to "all men everywhere," nevertheless it reaches only those who have an ear to hear. The vast majority of mankind have not yet been commanded to repent, because God's voice through his messengers has not yet reached every creature. The assurance, however, is that the message shall reach all in due time. And whoever hears the message will receive with it a full knowledge of the gracious opportunity for complying with its conditions and arrangements. In the present age the arrangement is that they will be judged according to their faith, while those who hear in the next age will be informed of a justification by works--that they "shall be judged every man according to his works."

Thus viewed, it will be seen that God's arrangement for judging the world in the next age is complete, and it is in view of this feature of future judgment, or future trial, or opportunity which will be granted to all mankind for attaining to everlasting life, that God commands that every one should repent of sins and make effort to come back into harmony with him and to receive the boon of eternal life. Had God made no arrangement through the ransom for the giving of eternal life to the world, it would have been useless to have commanded repentance; for why should men seek by repentance and striving against sin to attain a life eternal if it were unattainable--if no arrangement had been made through the redemption by which God might be just and yet the justifier of those who believe in Jesus and who seek to follow his directions and to attain the gift of life in him?

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THE ANNUAL MEMORIAL SUPPER.

Question: If, as you claim, the Scriptures teach that the annual celebration of the Memorial Supper is the only proper one, please say when and why a change has been made to a more frequent observance?

Answer: (1st) You know, and all know that the

Roman Catholic, the Greek Catholic and the Syriac Churches, as well as the Church of England, celebrate Good Friday as the memorial of our Lord's death, and the histories of all these churches show its observance as far back as church history goes,--any of them, all of them.

(2nd) You know, and all know, that the so-called Protestant Churches (Methodist, Presbyterian, Disciples, Congregational) ignore Good Friday. Really they protest in part against it, but ignorantly, without good reason, because of having lost sight of the original significance and importance of the day from a Scriptural standpoint. Those called "Protestants" recognize no particular day, but keep the feast weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, tri-monthly, etc., according to their fancy or convenience.

The above facts are known to all; but the reason for this change on the part of Protestants is known to but few of those even who practice the change, and is not to be found recorded in histories of any kind. The reason for this we will explain, and it will be manifest to all, although we cannot refer you to any other writings than our own on the subject. It is:--

(3rd) The Protestant reformation against Roman Catholicism was very properly specially against what Papists denominate "the sacrifice of the mass." And it was because Papists celebrated Good Friday as the most particular mass day, that Protestants were so particular to ignore that day.

(4th) The original deflection in Papacy, by which the sacrifice of the mass took the place of the original sacrifice made at Calvary, was gradual, and covered a long period of time, and is not to be found in the particular edict by the Pope or others. This, like many other false theories, grew gradually and spread itself gradually and unobservedly over the nominal Church of that time; and the records of the true Church of that time are not to be had, for it was so insignificant, in the eyes of the nominal system, that its views were ignored, but later on its writings, protests, etc., were destroyed as heretical.

The custom of performing the mass any and every day, and at any and every hour of the day and night, as might suit the convenience of its observers, having gained a thorough foothold, the original day (Good Friday) and its commemoration of the original sacrifice, was gradually merged by Papists into a great mass day. Nevertheless, even in this respect it has held a predominant position above all other dates with the devotees of the system, and every Roman Catholic who makes the slightest claim to faithfulness to his Church, is expected to be present and participate in the service of Good Friday, whether he attends mass at any other time of the year or not. This is a matter of fact that can be readily demonstrated by application to any Catholic.

(5th) Church history, as represented, not only in denominational literature, but also in the cyclopedias, records the fact that the method of computing the time for Good Friday was early changed from the Jewish method of counting the Passover, to a very slightly modified counting which always brings the anniversary on Friday and the anniversary of Easter on a Sunday. The Jewish method of reckoning made the days fall irregularly on any or various days of the week from year to year. Hence the change to the present method of counting was considered to be justified. So universal is this custom that the principal almanacs give not only the day of the Passover according to the Jewish reckoning, but also its date according to this modified counting of Christendom--"the Church calendar."

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