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VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER.

INSANITY OF THE DOUKHOBORS.

VARIOUS are the forms of insanity or mental unbalance. The whole world of mankind is mentally unbalanced some to one degree some to another degree, as the result of original sin and its death sentence which assails all the energies --mental and moral as well as physical. All are not wicked to the same degree or in the same manner. Some are insanely jealous, some insanely cruel, some insanely covetous or selfish, and the Doukhobors furnish an illustration of insane unselfishness. The lesson is that none of us have good sense enough to direct our own courses. All need the divine aid provided for us in the Word of God. Those who do accept this divine guidance by full consecration and submission to the holy spirit are Scripturally said to possess "the spirit of a sound mind," and to be "wise" with a wisdom which cometh from above.

It will be remembered that about three years ago the public press gave detailed accounts of the arrival in Canada of about 4,000 Russian peasants styled Doukhobors, who were emigrating on account of their religious convictions--refusal to serve in the Russian army, etc., etc. Next we learned that they were in conflict with Canadian marriage laws because

averse to perpetual marriage obligations and ceremonies. Now we learn that their false conceptions of liberty have taken a new form and that they have concluded that it is not right to deprive horses and cattle of their liberty, making them servants and menial slaves. In consequence their fields are idle and their good harvests unreaped while their horses and cattle disport themselves at liberty. Consequently many are likely to die of privation during the approaching winter. Truly conscience is a dangerous thing unless instructed by God's Word and thus guided by the spirit of a sound mind. Concerning these people and their troubles we give some extracts below.

The Boston Transcript remarks that it is "a religious mania, the like of which has perhaps never been seen in this country," and continues:--

"Fully four thousand Doukhobors, who settled in the Yorkton district, Northwest Territory, will starve or freeze to death, or be on the verge of starvation this year, if the Dominion Government does not take active steps to prevent their present religious mania from going further.... Nearly every one of the Doukhobors seen was clad in the lightest of cotton garments. They would afford no protection from an October breeze, to say nothing of a severe winter blast; and they say they will wear no other. In many of the houses visited a bag of flour was the only food visible. The Doukhobors will eat a few vegetables; but in few instances had they even brought them into their homes. Men originally strong were gaunt, hungry wrecks; and on a recent trip into Yorkton for flour a dozen big men, harnessed like mules to a heavy wagon, almost fell by the roadside through exhaustion and starvation. The women, so far, have escaped any of the work that must fall on the men since they have discarded the use of animals; but, if this year's crop is to be harvested, they will soon have to harness themselves up to the heavy wagons as the men do. They have made absolutely no provision for the future; and, what is perhaps worse, the religious mania that possesses them is becoming more intense and is spreading. The attempt by the Dominion Government to help these people has apparently had no effect. How it will end will probably be told when the intense cold of that district sets in."

The London Morning Journal says of this matter:--

"These 'maniacs' are apparently simply a gentle Christian sect who have been suddenly seized with the question which Buddhists answered trenchantly enough many a century ago. Asking themselves by what right they dared to exploit any living and sentient creature with capacities of pleasure and independence as great as their own, they became strict vegetarians. But the Russian idealist is capable of a fierce consistency. Be he tyrant or nihilist, Tolstoyan or Doukhobor, he makes no pact with ideas. Having ceased to slay

animals for food, the Doukhobors could find no sanction for

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subjecting them to the servitude and mutilation of the farmyard. They released their horses and cattle, renounced eggs and milk, wool and leather, and now they are attempting to live on bread and water--clad, we suppose, in cotton. It is a hardy enterprise, but, unless indeed, like Pythagoras, they have scruples about beans, there is no reason why they should fare worse than the millions of good Buddhists who even strain water lest there should be life in it."

Quite true, millions of Buddhists died in the recent famine in India, refusing to eat animal food--the animals starving also. We regret to note a similar delusion and false conception of holiness creeping in amongst "Vegetarians";--a disposition to consider the eating of meat "unclean" and "unholy"; a disposition to consider themselves superior to meat-eaters, and to despise them;--to call them "cannibalistic," etc. We offer no objection to those who claim that they have better health as a result of a purely vegetable diet: it is every man's duty to supply to his system the diet which will in his judgment yield the largest degree of comfort and efficiency in his case. But we do object to the claim of special sanctity and acceptableness with God on account of a purely vegetable diet. Those who take that position are distinctly setting themselves up as wiser than God, and holier than our Lord Jesus who not only ate animal food (lamb and fish at least) but who miraculously created fish for food. (John 6:11; 21:6-11.) The inspired Apostle "bound" the question and settled it (Matt. 16:19; 18:18; Acts 15:28,29): the Apostle Paul declaring: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; ...forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth." (I Tim. 4:1-4.) Realizing man's natural unsoundness of judgment, Christians should "not lean to their own understanding" but should seek the wisdom of God, and nowhere is this wisdom better illustrated than in him who was "holy, harmless and separate from sinners." Whatever our Master did and taught it would be blasphemy for us as his disciples to call wrong or sinful for us or for others.

Mr. A. St. John, an Englishman who became converted to Tolstoyan philosophy instead of Christianity, and who recently visited America in the interest of the Doukhobors, gives his views of their present craze in the "Midland Herald" (England) as follows:--

"The time of emigration, of change of circumstances, of unsettlement and resettlement, proved to be a perhaps severer

strain on the character of these peasants than all their sufferings in the Caucasus and Siberia. They were worn out to some extent, I think, in body and spirit, and they came into circumstances where the work was new to them, and they came into an atmosphere--well, perhaps where a little materialism prevailed. At one time some of them seemed lazy and unreliable--and then some of them seemed to become demoralized and materialized. There were cases of quarreling and fault-finding here and there. The leading men were mostly in Siberia. The state of affairs was lamented. 'I don't know what has come over our people. They are quite changed. If only we had our Siberian exiles here; then it would be quite different.' This is the sort of thing I heard occasionally. Many were sad and ashamed.

"But the old spirit was there still. And now it has revived, I think. And I suppose that, in reaction from the period of materialism, has come a time of heightened spirituality (what shall we call it?). Some have gone to great extremes. One letter told me of a man who had fasted thirty-six days, and was not expected to live. But for the most part it has been evident from their letters that they have been for some time quietly and carefully thinking out the problems of living in their present surroundings while fulfilling the highest demands of conscience. Thus, tho some feel inclined to give up milk and butter, yet they do not want their children and old and sick folk to suffer in consequence. And while they feel compunction in making animals work for them, those same animals whom they can see enjoying so immensely the free life on the prairie, yet they do not wish to sell them to others, nor by giving up old habits too suddenly, or too wholesale, to entail suffering on the weak, or unpreparedness for emergency...

"What I want to impress upon people here is that these are--a great many of them at least--thinking peasantry. They are not all the same. That is one of the points in which I am so proud of them. They have their conservative old stagers and their moderates and their progressives. They have their formalists and their broad freethinkers. And they are human, oh, so human! Of course the Canadians don't understand them. But if the Canadian Government goes on with the kind and sympathetic forbearance that it has hitherto pursued, and if we will wait and watch what comes of it all, we may learn a lot."

"Let your moderation be known unto all men," says the Apostle. A live conscience needs to be "taught of God" in order that moderation and not mental unbalance shall result. The truth in its purity will seem erratic enough to worldly people who cannot comprehend it, and every other peculiarity should be carefully avoided. Conscientious blunders are amongst the most injurious. Note the mistaken conscientious conviction of Saul of Tarsus that he ought to persecute Christians. Note also the claim of Seventh Day Adventists that they must work on the first day of the week if they would have divine approval and everlasting life. As an illustration of a misguided

conscience and its baneful effect in social affairs we mention the case of an editor's wife. She at one time took pleasure in assisting him in his work. By and by a deluded and misguided conscience told her that God wished her to be editor in chief and publish what she pleased. When the editor demurred that he dare not abandon his stewardship, the deluded conscience told its owner that she should no longer co-operate, but more, that she should break her marriage covenant in deserting her husband and home, and that she should say all manner of evil against him falsely, until such time as he would yield to her the liberties of the journal--which her conscience told her was God's will.

The moral of all such lessons is, "Be not wise above what is written." "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,--rightly dividing the Word of truth."

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"AWAY FROM ROME" MOVEMENT IN ENGLAND.

The Fortnightly Review contains an article from the pen of Rev. Arthur Galton, a clergyman of the Church of England, who formerly went over to the Roman Catholic communion but returned. Rev. Galton in serious vein declares "that he has been made the spokesman for one hundred and fifty secular clergymen" of the Roman Catholic church, pledged "to work jointly as a corporate body, by constitutional means and through canonical methods, for the reformation they desire" in the Roman Catholic Church and its "unlawful authority." He declares: "It is obvious to everyone who studies history with an impartial mind, that the English people and the Roman court are incompatible," and adds:--

"Between the Norman conquest and the middle of the fourteenth century, when our rulers generally were strong, when our sense of a national and an independent life was growing, that incompatibility and the friction caused by it are manifest in contemporary annals. The grievances then complained of were dealt with by legislation in the century that followed. These grievances, to sum them up shortly, were all attributed to the misgovernment, the cupidity, and the ever-growing usurpations of the Roman court. Some of our forefathers entered the Christian Church with a grateful and generous devotion for the Roman bishops, which continued until their sentimental affection was destroyed by the scandalous reality. Their practical experience of the methods and officials of the Roman court forced them to repudiate its authority, for political, financial and ethical reasons. In spirit, in aims, in methods and institutions, the English people and that narrow oligarchy of Italians, which

pretends to be the Catholic Church, are by their respective qualities necessarily opposed to one another. Religious questions enter much less into the mutual estrangement between Rome and England than most theological controversialists imagine. Numerous and flagrant individual cases, as well as the general effects of the Roman system in political and ecclesiastical affairs, must compel serious thinkers to ask themselves whether the Papal Government, as such, has any religion at all, except in phrases; or whether it can have had any, as a corporate institution, since the pontificate of Nicholas the First. The most prominent and abiding impression conveyed by the papacy, since the ninth century, is that it has been a political and financial organization masquerading in a theological disguise for the attainment of temporal domination."

"The writer and his friends see no hope of a reform by any ordinary means. Their plan is to combine, and to act together. They do not wish to make a new sect, nor do they wish to be merged into the Church of England. They intend to set up a bishop of their own, the validity of whose orders cannot be challenged by the papal theologians, or doubted by any Catholic. They wish to work still among and for their own people. The details for this are all arranged. For the lawfulness of this course, they appeal to ancient precedent and to the regulations of canon law. It is admitted, as they argue, that in a case of necessity, if lawful requests be denied by the existing authorities, the sufferers may provide an alternative authority for themselves. Few people, who know and face the facts, can deny the existence of grave abuses, which are a danger to faith and morals, as well as a violation of constitutional and canon law. Few, probably, can say with any truth that they expect a reformation by ordinary means, and through the Curia. The utterances of the Pope, the declared policy of his advisers, the growth of the religious orders, the whole condition of affairs in the Papal Church, proclaim surely a state of necessity. This of itself clears the reforming movement from that charge of schism to which it might be liable in ordinary times. These reformers look upon themselves as Englishmen by inheritance and birth, but not quite as Englishmen in church affairs. Their attitude, both with regard to Rome and Canterbury, is similar to that of certain communities in early days who were allowed, without any taint of heresy or schism, to be ministered to by their own bishop, and not by the local bishops where they happened to reside. These reformers, then, propose to establish a subsidiary or strangers' bishop. They mean to repudiate the jurisdiction of bishops who are merely delegates and nominees of the Roman court. By severing themselves from the abuses and the usurped authority of that mundane organization, they do not abdicate their rights in the Catholic Church, they do not give up their reverence for the lawful and primatial authority of the Roman bishops, nor do they forget the precedence which is due by right to the historical position and the long services of their venerable See. If the papacy will only accept an unreasonable service,

and continue to assert an unlawful authority, the charges of heresy and schism recoil of necessity upon itself. The position of these new reformers, with regard to Rome, is precisely the position and attitude of our own reformers in the sixteenth century."

"The reformers, for whom this article is written, have no drawing toward these neo-Anglicans, whom they consider more Romanized and narrow than the Romans. They bid them remember the position, the traditions, and the history of the English Church which they appear so strangely to have sophisticated or forgotten. They implore them to realize that the existing Curia may be broken to pieces, or may be broken away from lawfully, but it will never yield to persuasion, or grant any constitutional reform. Those who know it are compelled to give up all hope of reformation and reunion by means of it. Those who have only a theoretical imagination of it, who dream about it as an ideal, are surely ill-advised and worse, not to profit by the experiences and warnings of those who knew it only too well through its mundane, arbitrary, scheming, and un-English administration."

JEWISH WOES IN ROUMANIA.

"It is the time of Jacob's trouble," as the prophets foretold. The poor Jews are subjected to tribulations in one country after another by so-called Christians who are totally ignorant of real Christianity. Now it is Roumania that persecutes, and all right-minded people are pleased to note that Mr. Hay, U.S. Secretary of State, has addressed a communication to the great powers of Europe calling attention to the fact that the "Berlin Conference" of European Powers (1878) created Roumania a separate State upon condition that its laws should maintain religious liberty, and that this arrangement is being violated. Whether the appeal will bear any

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fruit is doubtful; but it can surely do no harm to thus lift up a voice for Justice.

Concerning the persecutions the Roumanian Bulletin (London) says:--

"These conditions of life, humiliating tho they be, would not in themselves have sufficed to render the lot of the Roumanian Jews desperate, for it is conceivable that even without civil rights and opportunities of culture human beings may still manage to live with some degree of comfort. It soon became clear to the Roumanian Government, however, that a large and increasing unassimilated element in the country would inevitably lead to serious social and economic complications, and accordingly measures were taken to guard against this fresh danger. These measures have had

for their object the increase of misery and of the difficulties of life among the Jews, with the ultimate view of keeping their numbers stationary.

"In pursuance of this terrible policy, almost every form of Jewish economic activity has been the subject of restrictive legislation aimed ostensibly at aliens in general, but in reality affecting only the Jews. They have been expelled from the revenue service, the tobacco regime, and the railway organization. They are excluded from government tenders and contracts. They are placed at the mercy of their Christian competitors in trade, who alone are allowed to be members of chambers of commerce. Their participation in the management of financial corporations and joint-stock companies is severely limited. They may not act as brokers in any trade, and they and their agents are excluded from grain and cattle markets. Their expulsion from the drink traffic has ruined thousands of them. It is calculated that 20,000 were reduced to beggary by the law of 1884, which prohibited them from trading as pedlars."

The Roumanian government evidently desires to force the Jews to emigrate, and the Jews are doing so as rapidly as possible. On this point the Spectator (London) says:--

"They wish to reach America, but the Americans will not receive them unless they can prove that they are not paupers; and as they are two hundred thousand in number, the collection of the necessary funds is a work of difficulty and time. In Roumania they have absolutely no rights, and live at the mercy of a population which hates them to such a degree that their parliament has declared all Jews to be foreigners, altho they have been resident for centuries. Neither Germany nor Austria will do anything for them, and it seems impossible for Western Europe, which is more tolerant, either to protect them or to find them a new habitat."

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OUR GENERAL CONVENTIONS.

OUR two Annual Conventions (one at Des Moines, Iowa, the other at Washington, D.C.) belong to the past. The first, held September 13-15, served a large western district, and was attended chiefly by friends residing in Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Arkansas and Texas,--the attendance at the largest session being about 350. The interest of those present

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was both deep and fervent, as attested both by words and looks. God's blessing was with us, our cup of joy and sympathy ran over, and we trust continued to

do so after our return to our homes, so that the convention's joys and blessings reached and is still refreshing many times the number privileged to be in attendance. Thirty symbolized their consecration by water immersion. The convention was addressed by a large number of speakers, of one heart and one mind. The Christian Church kindly put its meeting house at our disposal on the entire day of the baptism service, which was preceded by a discourse explanatory of its deep import from our standpoint.

Each Convention seems better than the one previous, which at the time seemed so full of divine favor as to leave nothing to be desired. The last convention, at Washington, was no exception to the general rule in this respect: it was the largest we have ever had in point of numbers, and so far as we were able to judge, a fuller measure of the holy spirit could not be looked for ever, in the earthen vessels. Over 800 attended;--about 550 to 600 of these being from abroad--from Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, Illinois, Kansas, California, Georgia, North and South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Ontario.

The Calvary Baptist Church edifice of Washington was kindly put at our disposal for a discourse on baptism, which was followed by the immersion of 45 sisters and 42 brothers, amongst the latter being five formerly ministers, one Methodist, one a Second Adventist and three Baptists. Two of the latter remarked that they had immersed many without understanding the true significance of the ceremony or of the command back of it.

Like the Des Moines Convention, this one concluded with a Love Feast--though truth to tell the sessions throughout were love feasts with the Lord through his word and spirit and in prayer and praise. The "Pilgrim" brethren, supported by the Elders of the local congregation, and by the colporteurs to the number of about thirty, bade goodby to the convention visitors in general who (about 500) filed past them, led by such of the number as were the chosen Elders of various congregations, numbering about forty. Many eyes were dimmed with tears of joy and sympathy, and many lips expressed longing for the great Convention mentioned by the Apostle, when all the Elect shall meet in glory;--"the General Assembly and church of first-borns, whose names are written in heaven." Many too were the ejaculations of praise for divine blessings upon the eyes of our understanding, and of prayer for continued leading and instruction in the right ways of the Lord; and "The Lord bless thee and keep thee" seemed to be upon every lip.

In one way these Conventions are quite expensive,

but in another way they are very inexpensive. Probably \$5500 or \$10 per head, would not be too high an average estimate as respects the visitors; and about the same amount per capita for the home congregation. But who can estimate the value of the knowledge and spiritual uplift thus secured, and carried to other hundreds in every direction? Good results have already been noted also from quartering the friends with Christian families of Washington. Several have already become interested and are reading; and we doubt not the Washington Church will have a blessing in numbers as well as in interest and love and zeal--tho in these last respects it is difficult to imagine any great improvement, above what was shown by their untiring efforts to serve and please the brethren and in the careful preparations made beforehand.

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

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THE BLIGHT OF SIN AND ITS ONLY CURE.

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."--John 3:14,15.

ISRAEL'S experience in the wilderness prolonged thirty-eight years on account of their unreadiness, lack of faith to enter Canaan at first, was doubtless a season of valuable instruction in various ways; tho very little is told us respecting this period. Evidently those years of drilling in the laws, sacrifices, etc., brought the people to a comparatively moral and religious condition; so much so that their next prominent sin was in the nature of boasting of their holiness--pride of heart. Admitting degradation and sin and faithlessness in the past, they felt that they had made great progress and should no longer be dealt with as formerly. Admitting that it had been necessary for Moses and Aaron to rule them imperiously, they denied that this was any longer necessary; and under the leadership of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, quite a sedition developed;--the influence extending so far that it included two hundred and fifty leaders and most prominent men of Israel. Their contention was that all Israel was now holy (Num. 16:2,3); and that, therefore, Moses and Aaron should no longer be considered the only ones with whom God would communicate,--the intimation being that

they were endeavoring to perpetuate a hierarchy which God had not established, and which true Israelites should not recognize.

There is a lesson here for spiritual Israelites: It teaches us not to become heady or highminded or boastful or proud of spiritual attainments and godliness. It teaches us that in God's estimation there is no holiness that does not include humility and full submission to the divine arrangement. It reminds us also of the prophesied rebellion that will take place in the close of the Millennial age, amongst those who will have reached perfection under the Millennial Kingdom, some of whom will manifest their unfitness for eternal life by their lack of full submission to the divine arrangement.

Moses called to him the representatives of the insubordination; kindly and patiently he reasoned with Korah, the one who responded to his call, pointing out to him the Lord's arrangement; from the others he received but an insulting refusal to discuss the question. This kindness, forbearance and endeavor to help those whose feet were slipping out of the way, all the more commends the leader to our sympathy and appreciation, and teaches us to be gentle and patient with "those that oppose themselves" to the divine order. (2 Tim. 2:25.) But we are not to expect success in every instance, even as Moses had no success in this case; where the heart is wrong it cannot be guided by reason; and pride, boastfulness and ambition are evidences of a wrong condition of heart.

So far from endeavoring to use force against these men, Moses took them at their word and invited them to display the powers, privileges and divine authority which they claimed; and appointed that they should the next day meet with himself and Aaron and let the Lord by his providences decide matters. Korah's influence over the whole congregation was evidently very great; it is generally easier to influence people by telling them that they are better and greater than they had previously supposed--it works upon their pride. However, the Lord spared the people, tho he gave an illustration of his indignation against their assumptions,--by causing the earth to open and swallow up these three leading "holiness" rebels, their tents, families, etc., and by causing a plague to break out in the camp, in which the two hundred and fifty chief men who had joined in the conspiracy, died. One lesson here is that we should beware that our holiness is of the proper kind --not self-righteousness, but submission to the righteousness which is of God. Although these men did not die the Second Death, but will, in due time, share in the benefits of the great atonement accomplished by the antitypical Priest, nevertheless, they typified persons who enjoying great favors of the

Lord misappropriate these, applying them selfishly and in pride, will die the Second Death, and with them their allies, sharers in their sin.

One would suppose that so striking a manifestation of the divine will would thoroughly correct the wrong spirit amongst the people, and show them the difference between their boastful self-righteousness and the righteousness of full submission to the divine arrangement which alone could have the divine approval. But not so; human perverseness is shown in the fact that on the next day the leaders of Israel

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assailed Moses and Aaron with the charges that they were unholy men, murderers--that they had killed on the previous day, by some power of their own, some who were truly the Lord's people. As a consequence the Lord's indignation was enkindled against the people and they were spared, by the interposition of those whom they had traduced, only after 14,700 of their number had perished by pestilence. This same spirit of pride, rebellion, and its consequences may be noted in our day; how many there are who, because not right at heart, are in more or less sympathy with those with whom the Lord has no sympathy! They have seen "heady" ones rise up in the congregation of the Lord, seeking to draw away disciples after themselves, and afterward have seen these rejected of the Lord, instead of becoming great leaders as they expected; they have seen how, in the Lord's providence, the earth (worldliness or various false ideas) swallowed them up, buried them in oblivion so far as leadership was concerned; yet after witnessing the Lord's dealings with these, in putting them out of the light of present truth, etc., they are still sympathetic

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with them and complain that their fall into the darkness and oblivion was not of the Lord, but the fault of his "faithful." These resemble the Israelites who blamed the loss of these "renowned" would-be leaders upon the Lord's truly appointed servants, Moses and Aaron. Let us learn from this lesson to be always on the Lord's side, and to keep our hearts so free from prejudice, pride and self-will, that we may always be able to discern which is the Lord's side in every controversy. Those who do not so, are likely to lose their spiritual life as the 14,700 in this type lost natural life.

After impressing the lesson of divine appointment, the Lord called for the rods of the chief men of every tribe--Aaron representing the tribe of Levi, and these rods were laid over night in the Most Holy; they were brought forth the next morning in the sight of all the

people, and no change had taken place in any of them except the one belonging to Aaron, which was covered with buds, blossoms and almonds. Thus did the Lord emphasize his choice of the tribe of Levi and of the Aaronic priesthood, and impress the lesson of their recognition upon all Israel. So, too, the Lord has chosen Christ as the High Priest of our order, or profession, and the Church and household of faith, to be associated with him in the work of the ministry. These will ultimately be made known to all who desire harmony with the Lord; to all who will enter into the Millennial Canaan;--all the people will then know that God puts a wide difference between the "household of faith" and various teachers of morality, higher criticism, etc., who have denied the faith and who are attempting to teach upon other lines than those laid down in the Scriptures, of which the cross of Christ is the center. The light, the vitality and the fruits of righteousness are centered in the household of faith, and this will be made manifest to all.

Two other incidents of about this time--the close of the wilderness detention,--were the death of Miriam, Moses' sister, and the death of Aaron, his brother. The forty years being about completed, the people were ready now, under the Lord's direction, to enter Canaan. Kadesh Barnea had evidently remained the center of their encampment, and their Tabernacle had evidently continued there, tho of necessity so large a body of people with their flocks and herds must have roamed over quite an extensive area during those thirty-eight years, and of this we find various indications. (Num. 33:19-36.) The Canaanites probably feared an invasion and had to some extent fortified the country in the vicinity of Kadesh Barnea, the southern borders of Canaan, and perceiving now that the Israelites were preparing to move, they made an attack upon them and took some prisoners;--probably by way of forewarning and intimidating them. This was the occasion for the vow mentioned in verse 2, that the cities of the Canaanites should be utterly destroyed when taken.

Verse 3 need not be understood to mean that Israel vanquished the Canaanites and destroyed their cities at this time; it is rather to be viewed as a parenthesis, an explanation that afterward, during the campaign of Israel in Palestine, God in harmony with their vow, did deliver to them the cities of the land, and that they did destroy them. They called the place Hormah as a remembrance of their vow. The right of such a total destruction of an enemy and his property would not be allowed in the civilized world to-day; we are to remember, however, that the Lord in these dealings with Israel was making types far reaching in their significations. In the type, the Canaanite and his citadels, etc., represented sin, its enticements, its blandishments and strong entrenchment in the

weaknesses of the flesh. No compromise or truce with sin is to be made on the part of the new creature; it is to be a war of extermination;--and this was the signification of the type. It helps us to understand the matter much better, too, when we know that those Canaanites who were destroyed were not turned over by the Lord to devils for eternal torment; --but simply went down into the great prison-house of death, just the same as their fathers had done before them, only in a different form of death. It mattered nothing whether these died of pestilence or by the sword;--the time will come, anyway, when they shall all be brought forth from the prison-house of death by the great Redeemer, the antitypical seed of Abraham, to have an opportunity of coming to a full knowledge of the truth that they may be saved;-- and that everlastingly, if they will, upon condition of their obedience and heart-conformity with the divine will.

Israel made a request of the Edomites (descendants of Esau, their father Jacob's brother) that they might pass through their country with a view to entering Canaan from its eastern side instead of from the southern. The Edomites refused the request, and thus compelled a long and tedious journey around their territory through a very arid, barren country. It was here that the people so recently claiming to be "all holy" became so discouraged that they again wished that they were back in the land of Egypt and murmured

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against God and against Moses and against the manna upon which they were still being fed. It was at this juncture as a punishment for their impatience and their despising of the Lord's leading and provision for them, that the Lord sent them the plague of

THE FIERY SERPENTS

Whether the Lord specially created these serpents or whether he merely took advantage of circumstances and conditions, as when he sent them the quail, we do not know, nor does it matter. In God's miracles he generally uses means to every end; these are to us miracles because we do not fully comprehend the means employed. As for instance, if we could imagine the knowledge of the method of telephoning, or the method of wireless telegraphy to be entirely blotted from the knowledge of man, the results, told in succeeding ages to people who knew not of the methods, would be miracles; we do not class them as such, because we understand the modus operandi. The fierceness of the attack of the serpents and the great mortality resulting amongst the Israelites

might cause us to wonder; but we are to remember that it is estimated that in India, even at the present time "several thousand people annually die from the bite of the cobra." One writer describing the bite of a certain Brazilian serpent, says: "Even in those cases where the sufferer recovers, for a time the system is injured and the latent virulence of the poison can hardly be eliminated from the same even at the cost of festers, boils and ulcerations which last for many years. The nervous system is also very much affected as giddiness and paralysis are usually amongst the evidences of the strong venom which this reptile extracts by some inexplicable chemistry from perfectly harmless food."

The people had learned something through their experiences, and hence needed not to be told that this visitation of the fiery serpents was a chastisement from the Lord for their murmuring and rebellion. We are to learn in this connection to differentiate between such experiences on the part of the Israelites and similar experiences on the part of the world in general. We are to remember that by the Law Covenant which God made with Israel at Mt. Sinai, he specially pledged their protection from disease and every adverse influence so long as they were faithful and loyal to him, and specially threatened that disloyalty and unfaithfulness would be punished by sickness, calamities, death, etc.--Lev. 26:3-46.

To the Israelite, therefore, sickness and pestilence meant divine wrath--to the other nations it meant the ordinary course of events; they were neither protected from the various death scourges of the world nor were these death-dealing scourges specially sent upon them.

The people came to Moses confessing their sin and asking his mediation with the Lord on their behalf; and, God-like, he did not stop to chide them when they were penitent and remorseful, but presented their case before the Lord most heartily. The Lord heard and answered the petition, but in a roundabout manner, well calculated to impress upon them their dependence upon him,--and to provide for us, spiritual Israelites, a great spiritual lesson. The remedy for the bites of the serpents was a look at a brazen (copper) serpent fastened to the top of a pole, said pole probably being carried about throughout the camp of Israel, that all the sick, suffering ones might have the opportunity of looking upon it and thus being healed.

We are not to question the meaning of this as a type, for our Lord himself in our Golden Text declares it. The serpent on the pole represented Christ on the cross. True, the serpent represents sin, vileness, evil, pain, suffering; while our Lord Jesus could be our Redeemer only because he was holy, harmless, separate from sinners. The question arises then,

Why was the serpent used to represent our Lord?
Why was not Moses instructed to make a brazen dove, or a brazen lamb--as representative of the meekness and harmlessness and purity of him who died for us? We answer that a correct appreciation of the answer to this question is the key to an understanding of the great atonement provided by God for man, through the "Man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (I Tim. 2:5,6.) The serpent represented the atonement transaction better than any other emblem could. The serpent in Eden was Satan's agent and representative in the alluring of our first parents into sin: in this sense of the word the bite of that serpent, the devil, upon our race through our first parents, is destroying all the human family in death,--with the attendant pains and sufferings on account of which the Apostle declares, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together." (Rom. 8:22.) It is impossible to get rid of the sin-virus of "that old serpent;" there is no

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remedy that we can apply: mankind can only look to God for help; and the help which God provides is through the sending of his Son, the undefiled One. Nor will it do that that undefiled One should visit us and know our troubles and sympathize with us, and counsel us how to get rid of sin. No, this is not sufficient, he may not contradict or undo the Father's decrees, tho he may fulfil them--he may take our place, he may bear our penalty. And thus the Apostle expresses it, "He who knew no sin was made sin for us," that we might be made right in the sight of God through him. The serpent then represented sin, in every sense of the word; and as the whole world was serpented or inoculated our Lord must take the place of the sinner in order that the sinner might get free from the sentence; and this is why it was a serpent that was raised on the pole. "He was made sin for us"--treated as the one in whom centered the sin of the whole world.

As the bitten Israelite looked to the brazen serpent and was healed in response, so in the antitype we who are bitten by the serpent of sin, and who are writhing and dying under its virus must look away with the eye of our understanding (now the eye of faith),--we must look unto Jesus. We must see him as the serpent, as the one who took our place, bore

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our sin-penalty, became our substitute, and thus bought us from under the sentence of death. It was not sufficient that the Israelite looked into the sky or looked at a lamb or looked at a bird overhead, it was

necessary that he look at the brazen serpent. So with us, it will not do that man look at Jesus in various lights and shadows, some believing one thing and some another respecting him; for according to the divine arrangement only the one kind of faith in Christ is efficacious--and that is the faith which recognizes him as the ransom, as our substitute, "Made sin for us." Men may get some blessing from looking at Jesus as a great, model man, a great Jew, a great teacher, etc.; they may find such a look profitable, morally, mentally, physically; but from such a view they cannot get eternal life, they will still perish from the bite of sin unless they do more than this;-- only those who view him as the antitype of the serpent in the wilderness have his promise of forgiveness, and acceptance with God unto eternal life.

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"HE GAVE THEM JUDGES."

--JUDGES 2:7-16--NOVEMBER 16--

"They cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses."--Psa. 107:19.

ISRAEL'S HISTORY from the time of the division of Canaan amongst the tribes until the anointing of Saul to be their king, a period of 450 years*, is called the period of the judges-- Joshua being the first judge and Samuel the last. These judges were evidently not elected to their position, but raised to it providentially. But as these judges had no power or authority, collected no revenues and held no office which they could entail upon others, it follows that any power or influence they possessed was a personal one, and to give it weight or force implied a proper acknowledgement of them as divinely appointed or raised up. This arrangement led the people continually to look to God for their helpers and leaders rather than to engage in an ordinary claptrap of politics in which personal ambitions and spoils would dominate and control. God did the nominating, and the people in proportion as they would come into harmony with him took cognizance of his choice (and practically endorsed it or voted for it) by their acceptance of the judge. There may have been a more methodical procedure in some instances, as is intimated in our lesson (verse 7), where the elders of Israel who had witnessed God's miraculous interposition on their behalf and who outlived Joshua, seem to have constituted the judges in the different tribes.

This arrangement by which God gave Israel its

judges is in considerable harmony with his dealings with spiritual Israel during this Gospel age--raising up for them from time to time special counselors, deliverers, ministers. Similarly Spiritual Israelites are not to caucus and wire-pull and decide for themselves who shall be their spiritual leaders; but are to regard the Lord as the great Chief Captain, and to look to him to raise up from time to time such spiritual chieftains as he may please. The acceptance of the leadings of these as God's appointees does not necessarily mean their selection by ballot, but may be indicated merely by giving ear to their teachings in harmony with the Word of the Lord. The lead of such spiritual lieutenants of divine appointment will always be marked by spiritual victories and the bringing of the Lord's people into closer heart-relationship with him. Any leadership which does not produce such fruits is evidently not of the Lord; the spirit of the Lord leads not to bondage, ignorance or strife, but to love, joy, peace of heart, liberty of conscience.

Israel needed no congress or legislature, for it had one Lawgiver--the Lord--and the Law given at Mt. Sinai was to be perpetually the guide to the nation. The priests and Levites under the Law were the appointed helpers of the people in things pertaining to God--to instruct them in the Law and represent them in the typical sacrificing, atonement work, etc. In each tribe, also, the elders, according to their capacity, had charge of the civil affairs of the tribe. As for soldiers and a war department, they had none. The divine Law was to separate them from other nations, and if they would remain faithful to the Lord he was to be their protector against all antagonists.

Similarly spiritual Zion in every congregation is to look out from amongst themselves fit men for the services needed; God's Law is to keep them separate from the schemes and warfares and entanglements of the world; they are to be his peculiar people, and his pledge to them is that all things shall work together for their good so long as they abide faithful to him. They, therefore, need no armies armed with carnal weapons, although they are all soldiers of the cross, pledged to fight against sin, especially each within himself, and to lay down their lives for each other--"the brethren."

If the Book of Judges be read as a fully complete history of Israel for those four and one-half centuries, it would be a discouraging picture, and to some extent give the inference that they were continually in sin and idolatry, and suffering punishment therefor. But this would be an unfair view to take. On the contrary, the record passes by the happy period of Israel's prosperity, and specially points out their deflections from obedience to God and punishments for such transgressions and the deliverances from

their troubles through the judges or deliverers whom God raised up for them. That this was in many respects a favorable time for the Israelites is implied in the Lord's promise, "I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counselors as at the beginning."

--Isa. 1:26.

Incidentally the story of Ruth and of the parents of Samuel (I Sam. 1) give us little glimpses of the other side of the matter--of the God-fearing piety

*Millennial Dawn, Vol. II, Page 49.

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prevalent amongst many of the people, the happiness and contentment enjoyed. In our own day if we judge of the affairs of the world wholly by the daily history and details, in the newspapers, we might get the impression that crimes, strikes and accidents and imprisonments constituted the whole life in our own land; the great mass of the people attending to the ordinary affairs of life are scarcely mentioned. In accordance with this are the following lines from Whittier in which he rejoices in this land of liberty and blessing, notwithstanding the unfavorable reports thereof which go out to the world daily through the press,--

"Whate'er of folly, shame, or crime
Within thy mighty bounds transpires,
With speed defying space or time
Comes to us on the accusing wires;

"While all thy wealth of noble deeds,
Thy homes of peace, thy votes unsold,
Thy love that pleads for human needs,
The wrongs redressed, but half is told!"

The Israelites had been instructed by the Lord to utterly exterminate the people of the land, which extermination we saw in a previous lesson prefigured our conquests as spiritual Israelites over the desires of the fallen nature. Israel, however, settled down to enjoy the Land of Promise without fully exterminating the condemned ones; and the false religion of the latter, later on contaminated the Israelites through friendship and fellowship; and thus these whom God had condemned gradually alienated the hearts of many from their full, proper loyalty to the Lord; seducing many of them into a lascivious idolatry. So with the spiritual Israelites who do not wage a valiant battle against the natural desires of their own fallen flesh--they find shortly that the flesh prospers at the expense of the spiritual life and that truces with the flesh mean that their love for the Lord is gradually cooled

until some form of idolatry creeps in--the love of money, or of praise of men or of self, etc., dividing with the Lord the love and reverence of their hearts.

We are not to suppose that all the Israelites fell away into idolatry; we are rather to understand that a considerable number of them became alienated for a time, repeatedly, from the love and worship of the

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Lord, and thus repeatedly brought upon them the Lord's disfavor. Verse 16 supports this thought, suggesting to our minds that our lesson is a condensed statement of the whole period of the judges--over four hundred years. Applying this to spiritual Israel we are not to expect that the Lord's displeasure with his people would delay until they had fully and completely gone into idolatry to self or wealth or fame; but rather that when some of the affections of the heart begin to go out to other things, the Lord's chastisements would be sent to reprove and rebuke and correct, while still there is in our hearts something of obedience and love toward him;--before the world, the flesh and the Adversary should have time to capture us completely.

These records of divine chastisements, and Israel's subsequent repentance, and the Lord's deliverances, were all proofs of the divine love and care for that consecrated people. So far as we have information divine power was not exercised thus upon the other unconsecrated nations, for their reproof and correction, etc. They were left as strangers, foreigners, aliens from God and from his promises. So now the Lord's corrections in righteousness, his chastisements, etc., are evidences of special protection and care and relationship to the "house of sons." It is because of our acceptance in Christ and our consecration to the Lord, that he, in turn, has accepted us as sons and gives us the experiences, trials and difficulties needful to our testing and character-development; and it is to the intent that we may realize the treachery and the seductive influences of our own fallen natures, represented by the Amalekites and Canaanites, and that we may utterly destroy these, and thus come eventually into the condition mentioned by the Apostle when he declares that the consecrated should bring every thought into captivity to the will of God in Christ.--2 Cor. 10:5.

When fleshly Israel learned one lesson after another, and as fast as each was learned sent a cry of loyalty up to God, his power was exercised on their behalf and their deliverance was effected. So with the Spiritual Israelite when he recognizes the true situation and with thorough repentance turns unto the Lord and cries for deliverance from his own weaknesses and imperfections according to the flesh;--his

prayer is heard and his deliverance is provided for with the assurance that the Lord's grace is sufficient. The condition of the spiritual Israelite is represented in our Golden Text, "They cry unto the Lord in their trouble and he saves them out of their distresses." Such a cry to the Lord, however, implies that the sins and weaknesses of the flesh were contrary to the transgressor's will; it implies that in some manner he was seduced or entangled by the world, the flesh or the Adversary and that his heart is still loyal to the Lord and to the truth. All such who cry unto the Lord in sincerity and faith shall be heard, shall be delivered,-- his grace is sufficient for us.

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WHO IS WORTHY?

IN THE VISIONS of the Apocalypse we read of a wonderful scroll in the right hand of the great King who sits upon the throne of universal dominion. This scroll is a forceful representation of the divine plan, originally existing only in the mind of God, and which could not be made known to men until some one was found worthy to open the seals and display it to view. But "no one in heaven nor in earth was able to open the scroll, neither to look thereon," until one came whom the Revelator describes as the "The Lion [the strong one] of the tribe of Judah, the root of David," of whom the testimony is given--"Thou art worthy to take the scroll and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain and

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hast redeemed to God by thy blood out of every kindred and people and nation; and hast made them unto our God a kingdom and priesthood; and they shall reign on the earth."--Rev. 5:1-5,9,10.

Excepting the bare promise (written on the outside of the scroll--verse 1) of salvation through the Seed of the woman, nothing could be known of the wonderful scheme for human restitution until the Son of God, having left the glory of the spiritual nature, took our nature and by the sacrifice of himself redeemed us from death. Then, having his righteousness imputed to us by faith, we are counted worthy to look upon the scroll as he opens the seals one after another.

Great was the favor bestowed upon the Strong One of the tribe of Judah, in being permitted to open the seals--to carry out and make manifest the grand designs of infinite love--and great is the privilege of those who are permitted to look thereon as the seals

are opened. It is not our purpose here, however, to treat of the peculiar symbols relating to the opening of the seals, but rather of what constitutes worthiness in us to look thereon, and what favor of God to us is implied in this privilege of looking.

The knowledge of God's purposes is due only to those able and anxious to co-operate with him in their development; for God does not display his plans to satisfy mere idle curiosity. First, then, if we would comprehend what is revealed within the scroll we must have faith in what is written on the outside--the promised redemption through the precious blood of Christ--and must be sincerely desirous of knowing the details of God's plan in order to an earnest co-operation with it. In other words, there must be the earnest inquiry arising from a heart grateful for the promise of life through the Redeemer--"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Such, and such only, are worthy to know, and such only ever come to see, in the sense of understanding and appreciating, the deep things of God written within the scroll. Such are the called according to the divine purpose, to be educated in and to serve the truth. Such are the righteous for whom the light (truth) is sown. Such was our Lord's attitude when he said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." (Heb. 10:7.) He was meek and lowly of heart and ever ready to render implicit obedience to the will of God; and it is to those who are similarly meek that he was sent to preach the good tidings (Isa. 61:1)--to open the scroll. "The meek will he guide in judgment; the meek will he teach his way." (Psa. 25:9.) If any man have this evidence of worthiness--this acquaintance with the truth--let him rejoice in his privilege and by his works manifest his continued worthiness.

This worthiness is inquired for not only at the beginning, but all along the path of light. If we are not found worthy by the various tests applied from time to time, we cannot proceed in the path of light; and unless the unfaithful ones arouse themselves to greater diligence and watchfulness, the light that already is in them will become darkness. And how great, how intense must be the darkness of one cast out of light! (Matt. 6:23.) To find the glorious hope that once inspired our hearts slipping away and the truth whereon we built that hope beginning to seem like an old song or an idle tale, or as relics of the past to be displaced at any time by any plausible subterfuge of error which our wily adversary may be pleased to palm off as advanced divine truth, are indications that should arouse any one who discovers them to a realization of the fact that he is going into darkness--a darkness that will only become the more intense as he slips and slides along the backward track.

All along the way, as we have said, we will find tests applied to prove our worthiness to proceed from

knowledge to knowledge and from grace to grace. Who is worthy?--worthy to receive the truth, worthy to continue in the truth, worthy to suffer and to endure hardness as a good soldier for the truth, and finally to be exalted to power and great glory when truth and righteousness shall be exalted in the earth and their glorious triumph begun?

Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23.) At the very beginning of our course we each found the cross confronting us, and had we not taken it up we would not have been counted worthy even to look with intelligent appreciation into the precious truths of God's plan. And as we advance from step to step and find the truth increasingly precious--sweeter than honey from the honey comb--we have these additional evidences of continued worthiness and should greatly rejoice in them as such. Our possession of these truths has thus far proved us meek enough to discard the popular theology of the nominal church and be counted as heretics, turncoats, fanatics, cranks, or whatever our former friends are, in their ignorance, now pleased to term us. And it has proved us meek enough to bear willingly this reproach for the great joy of thus realizing the Lord's approval, and of seeing by faith the great blessings in store for us if faithful unto the end.

But "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall;" for sudden and sharp will be many of the tests applied to prove our continued faithfulness. The world, the flesh and the devil all conspire to allure, ensnare and overcome us. The world will present its allurements through friends or wife or husband or children. They will try to encroach upon the clearly defined line which you have drawn between yourself and the world. Then the flesh will grow weary in fighting the good fight of faith, weary of the reproaches of the world, weary of the alienation of former friends and weary of the self-denying, sacrificing and daily cross-bearing life. Then if you turn aside for a moment to ponder on these things the devil will quickly see his opportunity and will cunningly devise some trial specially suited to your peculiar condition of mind, and a crisis comes in your experience, the result of which will prove the exact strength of your devotion to God and his truth. These tests God permits and even desires to have come upon us, in order that we may be thoroughly tried and proved either worthy or unworthy of the great reward

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he has in keeping for those who remain faithful unto death.

The Lord is seeking his precious jewels. Many of them are indeed diamonds in the rough. The real

diamond is a noble, loyal, faithful character, devoted and uncompromising in its allegiance to God. Sometimes the circumstances of life have deprived such of education or culture and have left them only sufficient means for the barest necessities of life. But no matter, God's eye is on them: character is what he is looking for, and in due time, when that character is sufficiently developed, confirmed, tested and proved worthy of exaltation, he can and will add to it all the glories of knowledge and wisdom and grace and beauty. But first he will subject it to all the necessary tests. If it is a true diamond it will receive and it will also transmit to others the light of divine truth. Nothing so gloriously reflects the light as the diamond; and nothing so gloriously reflects the truth as the worthy character of the true and faithful saint.

Another way of testing a diamond is to put it under pressure. If it is a real diamond it will stand the pressure, for the diamond is the hardest substance known; but if it is not a real diamond it will go to pieces and thus prove itself spurious. So God allows us to come under the constant pressure of years of toil and care and self-sacrifice to see how we will endure; and blessed is that diamond-proved character that endures to the end.--Jas. 1:12; Matt. 10:22.

Sometimes the tests come in the way of trials of faith, and we are called upon to prove ourselves whether we be in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5) when some subtle errors are presented to us as advanced truth. But if we know the voice of the "Good Shepherd" we will not be easily beguiled. We remember the inspired counsel, "To the law and the testimony: if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20); and to the law and the testimony we go, and, relying implicitly upon this as the infallible teaching of the Spirit of God, we are enabled to arrive at definite, clear and positive doctrine. We are not left in doubt as to what is truth, but are enabled to give a solid Scriptural reason for the hope that is in us, on which hope we dare implicitly to rest our faith, and with humble boldness to successfully withstand the assaults of error. But oh, how dead to selfish ambition, how fully devoted to the will of God such must be!

Let us, dearly beloved, as we realize that thus far God has counted us worthy to look upon the scroll of his plan which has been unsealed for us by our blessed Lord Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, prove our worthiness to continue to look therein and to read the wondrous things of his law, by faithful obedience and loyalty to it in all things. Let us not undervalue our great privilege in being counted worthy to suffer some reproach and some hardness as good soldiers for the truth's sake; and also in being counted worthy to have some part in the blessed ministry of reflecting the light of divine truth; let us prove ourselves jewels

of rarest value, diamonds indeed, heartily receiving and beautifully transmitting to others the light of truth, and faithfully enduring the severest pressure that God may permit to come upon us; for, if faithful in these small things we shall in due time be counted worthy also to reign with Christ in power and great glory. Let us not be like some who have only a little good earth on the surface of their hearts while the heart is really hard and stony. Let the good seed of divine truth sink down and take deep root, and then let it branch out in the light and bear its abundant fruitage to the Master's glory. So shall we be accounted worthy to see the King in his beauty and to live and reign with him as his beloved bride and joint-heir. And when to the "worthy Lamb that was slain" the voices of the multitudes ascribe blessing and honor and glory and power, they will also exclaim, "Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to him for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."--Rev. 5:13; 19:7.

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THEY ALSO HAVE ERRED THROUGH WINE.

--ISAIAH 28:1-7--NOVEMBER 23.--

THIS is set before us as a temperance lesson. We will not say that it was not built upon certain conditions obtaining in Isaiah's time--that intoxication was a crying evil amongst the Israelites; but we do say that in our understanding this is a prophecy belonging specially to our day--whatever may have been the force, meaning or application in the day in which it was written. The whole tenor of this chapter as well as the following one, the twenty-ninth, in our judgment, proves this. Ephraim, used by the prophet as a name for the ten tribes of Israel in contradistinction to the two tribes called Judah, would seem to represent in our day nominal Christendom, and the drunkards of Ephraim would represent the intoxication of Christendom--not literal alcoholic intoxication, but the intoxication of error, of false doctrine, of human schemes and plans, the spirit of man and of the adversary in contradistinction to the spirit, the teaching of the Lord. This intoxication is referred to later on by the same prophet, saying, "They are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger but not with strong drink. For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep [spiritual stupor], and hath closed your eyes." (Isa. 29:9-12.) It is again referred to as the wine of Babylon with which all people have been intoxicated.--Rev. 17:2; 18:3.

The fall of nominal spiritual Israel, the fall of

Babylon in the great time of trouble now approaching, is described in verses 2,3. All who do not get rid of this intoxication of error, even tho members of the spiritual house, will have their portion with the world and with hypocrites in this coming storm, which will wreck completely our present civilization, social, political, financial and ecclesiastical. The glory

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of Babylon at the present time is as that of a beautiful flower, but it shall quickly fade, its riches and its pride will cause it to be the more quickly devoured --as are the first fruits of the summer--by the lawless ones, the anarchists, who will be bred of discontent, and who will be developed rapidly as a result of the iniquity that will prevail because of this drunkenness of Babylon with false doctrines and false expectation and blind stupor to the great changes of dispensation now taking place.

The explanation of a blindness, stupor and drunkenness so general as to affect not only the priests and prophets but all the people of Christendom, is referred to in verse 7. Babylon has had indeed the golden cup of the Lord's Word in her hands and has affected to give from it to the people the spirit of the Lord, but instead she has filled the cup and presents as the teaching of God's Word intoxicating errors which have misled the so-called Christian world. Thus the Adversary has used the nominal Church of God as his tool to deceive all that dwell upon the face of the whole earth--to misrepresent the divine character and plan. (Rev. 14:8.) Thank God for the promise that the time is coming when that old serpent, the devil, Satan, shall be bound a thousand years that he shall deceive the nations no more until the thousand years are finished!--Rev. 20:3.

In the midst of such a general declaration of the drunkenness of mystic Babylon and the storm of divine indignation about to overthrow churchianity, it is comforting to find that the Lord breaks in upon the narrative, suggesting that in the midst of such general intoxication of error there will be a residue of God's people whom he can approve and bless. Verses 5,6, call the little flock to our attention--the Lord's jewels. In the midst of all this confusion incidental to the fall of Babylon, the Lord himself will crown his faithful with glory and beauty. Even in the present life his truth in their hearts shall cause their faces to shine, and their table shall be spread even in the midst of those who are their enemies, who will be compelled to admit that these have meat to eat that the world knoweth not of and that they have a filling of the Lord's spirit that gives them joy and peace even in the midst of trials and difficulties. It will be more than this; for very shortly it will mean

that they shall receive at the Lord's hands the crown of life--be changed and receive the fulness of divine favor and blessing--glory, honor, immortality and joint-heirship with their Redeemer in his Kingdom.

These enlightened by the Lord and filled with his spirit will have sounder judgment even in the present life and be able to do valiantly in disputing and disproving the spirit of error and its proud and boastful claims; and by and by, when changed and made partakers of the Kingdom glories, the Apostle assures us that these shall be amongst the judges of the world, saying, "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" They will then with their dear Redeemer occupy the place of judgment during the Judgment Day, the Millennial Age, and overcome all the forces of error and darkness and evil, so that eventually the Lord shall bruise Satan under their feet, wholly overthrow his kingdom and influence, and establish in its stead the Kingdom of God under the whole heavens, destroying all who would corrupt the earth, bringing it, in harmony with the Lord's prayer, to that condition in which God's will shall be done on earth even as it is done in heaven.

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INTERESTING QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

POSITION OF THE WORLD IN MILLENNIAL AGE.

Question.--Are the sins of the world class all canceled at death? or, is only their Adamic penalty paid? and do they have an individual penalty still to pay?

Answer.--The sins of the whole world are paid, as far as divine justice is concerned--that is to say--God's account against Adam and his posterity has been sold, transferred and set over to him who purchased the same with his own precious blood.

The sins of the world are not canceled, so far as they are concerned; but a way is opened up, under the New Covenant, by which each can obtain a release. The terms are that when brought to a knowledge of Christ and the redemption in him each for himself shall will to reform and no longer to serve sin, but to serve the Redeemer and to obey him.

In view of this opportunity of retracing steps, it is proper for us to say that every word and action on the part of the world is either building up character or undermining it--either blessing or injuring the doer--either increasing or decreasing the number and weight of his stripes of punishment, all of which will be corrective.

Thus we may say that the Adamic penalty is set aside until such time as the individual shall have been granted a trial on his own account. If in this trial on his own account he sins wilfully refusing to follow the instructions of his Redeemer, he will be dropped back again into the original penalty--"returned into sheol"--which will be the Second Death.

Thus seen, the only individual penalty they have to pay will be that represented in their own degradation. We might include in this penalty any sins which they might commit in the present life against any degree of light; for such sins bring a special searing of conscience which the same deeds committed in ignorance would not bring. Hence all who thus sin against light receive proportionately a deeper degradation and will have correspondingly the more difficulty in extricating themselves, and returning to perfection under the favorable conditions of the next age.

The world of mankind are not reckoned as coming into existence a second time, but as having their previous existence revived and continued, with the privilege of accepting Christ under the New Covenant, and being regenerated by him, and thus attaining life--resurrection by judgment, which will progress throughout the Millennial age, and reach completion at its close--those who accept there will reach perfect life,

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while those who reject will there be destroyed in the Second Death. From this standpoint the only effect of good and evil in the present life will be upon man's own conscience and character.

In respect to I Pet. 4:6, briefly, I understand this to mean: that for instance we who hear the Gospel and who accept its terms have a two-fold standing--or are viewed in life from two different standpoints. The world views us and judges us according to the flesh, as human beings, just the same as the remainder of the world, but God judges us differently--to him we are new creatures, and he judges us according to our spirit, will, intention, and not according to the weaknesses and imperfections of the flesh. Hence it is that although we know that in our flesh dwelleth no perfection, nevertheless "The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us"--because God judges us not according to the flesh but according to the spirit.

USE OF FERMENTED WINE.

Question.--Is there any prohibition in the Mosaic Law respecting the use of fermented wine? Was the use of unfermented grape juice not authorized by the Jewish arrangement?

Answer.--We do not know of any place in the Mosaic Law in which the priests of that system were prohibited the use of wine. But if you know of such a statement kindly draw our attention to it. But even if this had been the case, it would not typify our Lord's life from Jordan to Calvary; for the Scriptural declaration respecting our Lord is that he did use wine. You remember they said of him, "Behold a wine-bibber and a glutton"--not, we presume, because he over-indulged, in either eating or drinking, but simply because he was less abstemious in respect to food and drink than John the Baptist, his Forerunner.

The prohibition of leaven would certainly apply as much to liquids as to solids during the Passover season amongst the Jews; but it is a mistake to suppose that wine contains any leaven after it is made. Leaven is sometimes added to grape juice in order to hasten the fermentation; but when the fermentation has all worked off the remaining wine is purer, freer from ferment and everything that would produce ferment than ever it was before. So far as we are aware, the Jews had no method of preserving grape juice unfermented. Their bottles were made of skin, and our Lord's parable shows that if new wine (grape juice) were put into old skin bottles that had lost their elasticity, the ferment would burst them, and the wine be lost; and hence the custom of putting new wine into new bottles, which would resist the strain of fermentation. Since the fermentation of grape juice sets in speedily, you can readily see that there would be no wine in all Palestine that had not finished its working or fermentation several months before the Passover season.

There are few persons more appreciative than ourselves of total abstinence from all intoxicating liquors; yet we do not permit our opposition to intemperance to warp our judgment in respect to the use of wine mentioned in the Scriptures. I explain the difference between the customs of that time and this by the fact, first, that they had a comparatively mild wine, which contained only a small quantity of alcohol, the product of the grape; and further, by the fact that their climate and other conditions were less inclined to lead to excesses than are ours. As you perhaps have noticed, we generally use, as "fruit of the vine," at our Memorial Supper, at Allegheny, either hermetically sealed grape juice, or the strained juice of crushed and stewed raisins.

Some tell us that the Hebrews never use the ordinary fermented wine during the Passover week. They no doubt are honest in intention, although they misrepresent the facts. For instance, if they inquire of a Hebrew--"Do the Jews during the Passover week use the ordinary wine?" the Hebrew would answer, "Oh, my, no, never--never!" From this they draw the inference that he means that they use nonalcoholic wine, and perhaps they are foreigners of tongue to each other,

and but imperfectly catch each other's thoughts and unintentionally deceive each other. But what the Hebrew did mean was that he would not think of buying any wine which he would use during Passover week from any ordinary wine-seller--just as the strict Hebrew would not think at any time of buying his meat from an ordinary butcher, but only from a Hebrew butcher, whose beef was killed in the presence of a rabbi, and duly attested to have been killed according to the Mosaic Law. This to the Jew would be clean meat, while any other would be unclean. Similarly would the orthodox Jew act in respect to his wine, especially that used during the Passover week. It must come through what he recognizes as the legitimate channels guaranteed that no leaven ever came in contact with it, and that no Gentile ever had anything to do with it. To satisfy ourselves on the subject, we procured from a very particular Jew a bottle of the kind of wine thus approved. We found it to be of the ordinary alcoholic kind.

YOUR HOUSE LEFT DESOLATE.

Question.--Were the Jews cast into outer darkness about A.D. 70? or five days before the crucifixion, when our Lord said, "Your house is left unto you desolate."? --Matt. 8:12; 23:38.

Answer.--As a house, or nation, Israel was rejected of the Lord at the time of the crucifixion, because of unpreparedness to receive the Lamb of God, the Messiah; but while the nation was there rejected and could no longer hope to be the seed which should be the blessing of all nations, nevertheless, in selecting the new nation, the holy nation out of every kindred, people and tongue, God was pleased to give the first opportunity of identification with the new nation to any of the fleshly Israelites who were Israelites indeed, and without guile. Consequently the Gospel went first to them and was confined to them for three and a half years,--Cornelius being the first Gentile convert. All of the period from our Lord's crucifixion down to the utter destruction of the Jewish polity A.D. 70, was the period of testing to that people: some of them, in right condition of heart, were accepted into the light and privileges then due; others, unworthy, were rejected from all divine favor and were in consequent darkness respecting transpiring events and ultimately felt the severity of the trouble figuratively called "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

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VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER.

IS BELIEF IN MIRACLES ESSENTIAL TO CHRISTIANITY?

NO QUESTION in modern religious thought is weightier than this one which Professor Charles W. Pearson's much-discussed utterance has served to bring once more into prominence. The problem, of course, is far from being a new one. Indeed, it has been noted in several quarters that the Methodist professor used much the same arguments as those embodied in Hume's essay on miracles, published a hundred and fifty years ago. In none of the theological controversies of the past century was the conflict more earnest than in this one over miracles, Renan, Strauss, and Huxley ranging themselves actively on the one side, Bishop Lightfoot, Dean Farrar, and Mr. Gladstone on the other. The Rev. Dr. W. Robertson Nicoll, who is best known as a journalist, but who has also done considerable work in the field of theology as editor of the London Expositor and "The Expositor's Bible," goes over the ground again in his new book, "The Church's One Foundation." The first few sentences of the book show that this "foundation," according to Dr. Nicoll, is the miraculous Christ, and that, if there be no such Christ, "Christianity passes into the mist and goes down the wind." He declares:--

"The church cannot without disloyalty and cowardice, quarrel with criticism as such. It is not held absolutely to any theory of any book. It asks, and it is entitled to ask, the critic: Do you believe in the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ? If his reply is in the affirmative, his process and results are to be examined earnestly and calmly. If he replies

in the negative, he has missed the way, and has put himself outside the church of Christ. If he refuses to answer, his silence has to be interpreted....No one argues against the right of philosophers to affirm that goodness is everything, that miracles are impossible, and that nothing in Jesus Christ has any importance except his moral teaching. But Christian believers in revelation are compelled to say that these philosophers are not Christians. If they refuse to do so, they are declaring that in their opinion these beliefs have no supreme importance. To say this is to incur the penalty of extinction. For Christianity dies when it passes altogether into the philosophic region. To believe in the Incarnation and the Resurrection is to put these facts in the foreground. Either they are first or they are nowhere. The man who thinks he can hold them and keep them in the background deceives himself. They are, and they ever must be, first of all. So, then, the battle turns on their truth or falsehood. It does not turn even on the inerrancy of the Gospel narrative. It does not turn even on the authorship of the Gospels. Faith is not a belief in a book, but a belief in a living Christ."

Dr. Nichol holds that here is a discussion which every Christian believer must enter upon with the keenest zest, since "it is a controversy not for theologians merely, but for every man who has seen the face of Christ, and can bear personal testimony to his power and glory." He continues:--

"If we assume at the threshold of Gospel study that everything in the nature of miracle is impossible, then the specific questions are decided before the criticism begins to operate in earnest. The naturalistic critics approach the Christian records with an a priori theory, and impose it upon them, twisting the history into agreement with it, and cutting out what can not be twisted. For example, the earlier naturalistic critics, Paulus, Eichhorn, and the rest, insisted on giving a non-miraculous interpretation. Strauss perceived the unscientific character of this method, and set out with the mythical hypothesis. Baur set to work with a belief in the all-sufficiency of the Hegelian theory of development through antagonism. He saw tendency everywhere....Dr. Abbott sets out with the foregone conclusion of the impossibility of miracles. Matthew Arnold says: 'Our popular religion at present conceives the birth, ministry, and death of Christ as altogether steeped in prodigy, brimful of miracle, and miracles do not happen.'"

The trouble with all these and similar critics, declares Dr. Nicoll, lies in the fact that they start out with the assumption that "God can not visit and redeem his people" and that "His arm is chained and

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can not save." Is it not much more rational, he asks, to take the view that miracle is "the fit accompaniment of a religion that moves and satisfies the soul of men, and that asserts itself to be derived directly from God"? He goes on to say:--

"Miracle is part of the accompaniment, as well as part of the content, of a true revelation, its appropriate countersign. Of course, those who take this ground do not deny, but rather firmly assert, the steadfast and glorious order of nature. But they hold with equal firmness that God has made man for Himself, and that if He has sent His Son to die for them, the physical order can not set the rule for the way of grace. If God has relented, nature may relent. They believe that if there is a personal God miracles are possible, and revelation, which is a miracle, is also possible. They are not dismayed when they are told that the Gospel age was the age when legendary stories and superstitions and miraculous pretensions of the most fanciful and grotesque kind abounded. Nay, rather their faith is firmer, for they take these stories and compare them with the Gospel miracles, and they say, How is it that the stories of the New Testament are lofty and tender and beautiful and significant, while the rest are monstrosities?...Granting the entrance of the Son of God into human history, granting the miracle of the Incarnation of the Supreme, there is little to cause any difficulty. Without the Incarnation, without the Resurrection, we have no form of religion left to us that will control or serve or comfort mankind." --Literary Digest.

* * *

It is comforting to find some few of God's servants, tho still in "Babylon," keen enough to discern the real situation, and courageous enough to lift up voice and pen in defense of his cause. Very evidently, however, the nominal "Christian ministry" has gone or is rapidly going so far into unbelief of the very fundamentals of Christianity as to forfeit all claim to the name Christian,--as Rev. Nicoll suggests. It is not Christian faith to acknowledge that Jesus lived a noble life, superior to that of other men, and that his teachings were superior to others of his day. It is not Christian faith to claim what the Bible denies respecting "the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man;" nor to proceed on this basis to claim that Jesus was a son of God in common with all others of our race, and peculiarly acceptable in proportion as he was superior to others of his race.

No, this is not Christianity: will not, and do not Jews, Mohammedans, Confucians, Buddhists and many others,--admit all this respecting our Master, --and some of them more? Are these all Christians? And if not, are those ministers Christians who still wear the livery of Christ in colleges and pulpits, for valuable considerations, and who are still under solemn vows to a faith which they sometimes publicly, but more often semi-privately, disavow? Assuredly not. Let us get back to that honesty of thought and word which calls disbelief in the fundamentals of Christianity, "unbelief," i.e., "infidelity."

We are told that Infidelity has disappeared;--

that Renan, Paine and Ingersoll have lost their place and power as opposers of Christianity. The very contrary is true: every college and seminary, secular and theological, has become a hotbed of infidelity, in which the leaders in world-politics, world-business, and world-religion are being taught, under the sanction of the "highest authorities," the very disbelief in the Bible which Infidelity has all along urged. The places of Renan, Paine and Ingersoll are more than filled by classical, scientific and theological doctors; --blind leaders of the blind.

Let no one be confused by these false shepherds, who are rapidly leading astray their confiding flocks; saying, peace and safety! All who follow them will soon find in their hearts an aching void,--a leanness of soul,--a Christlessness which will render miserable indeed all who have once "tasted of the heavenly gift and been made partakers of the holy spirit."

Christ and the apostles were either right or wrong in their teachings;--their claims were either true or false. If false, everything built upon them must logically fall with them;--including the very name Christianity, their synonym. If they were true, all that they taught stands together; and the name Christian belongs to these doctrines, and its application to other teachings is a sin; and its appropriation by others is grand larceny--robbery.

The fundamental teachings of Christ and his apostles (true Christianity) are (1) The fall of man into sin and under its penalty--death. (Rom. 5:12,17-19; I Cor. 15:22; 2 Cor. 5:14; Rom. 6:23). (2) The ransom of the race from condemnation by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ "finished" at Calvary. (I Tim. 2:5,6; Rom. 5:18; Jno. 19:30.) (3) The salvation, or recovery of the race, or so many of the same as will accept the grace of God in Christ when brought to a knowledge of the same, by a judgment-trial and restitution, called resurrection. (Acts 3:19,23; Jno. 5:28,29.) (4) The previous and preparatory trial, testing, judgment of an "elect" class whose resurrection to "glory, honor and immortality" will be instantaneous at the second advent of the Redeemer for the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven in the earth.--Rom. 2:7; 8:17,28,29; 2 Tim. 2:11,12; I Pet. 4:12,13; I Cor. 15:51,52; I Thess. 4:15-17.

Upon these scriptural premises the entire fabric of Christianity was built, and in proportion as any one of them is either denied or omitted "the faith once delivered to the saints" is lost, and the door is opened to false beliefs, and ultimately to utter unbelief;--cutting the cables by which the anchor of faith serves

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securely to hold us to heavenly hopes. The cutting

of these faith-cables means the temporary, if not the eternal loss of vital union with our Lord the Lifegiver. The growingly popular evolution theory is diametrically opposed to all these fundamentals of Christianity, and that is warning enough to the wise, but for no others.

FORTY MILLION DOLLARS FOR RELIGION.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, an interdenominational movement was organized in England and this country for the purpose of raising \$50,000,000 as a special fund to be devoted to various projects for the furtherance of religion, such as the payment of church debts, home missionary work, the endowment of religious institutions, etc. The Church Economist (New York), which has been making an investigation into the present condition of this fund, finds that about \$40,000,000 has already been raised. "If it be true that money talks," comments the Chicago Tribune, "then it is talking in a most convincing way as to the great interest at present in the cause of religion and the fundamental prospect of the churches."

Fully half of this great total, declares The Church Economist, was raised in this country, the Methodists North alone claiming \$17,000,000. The Canadian Methodists and Presbyterians, each of which bodies set out to raise \$1,000,000, have collected respectively \$1,250,000 and \$1,430,000. The English Wesleyans have secured \$4,500,000; and the English Congregationalists \$3,312,000. Congregationalists in Wales have raised \$860,000; in Australia \$415,000.--Digest.

RELIGION MIXING IN POLITICS.

The National Reform Bureau has established what corresponds to a mercantile agency concerning the leading people in every town in the United States, except that their religious status instead of their financial capital and resources is the subject of the work. Old telephone books have been secured of every town in the United States having a telephone system, and these books have a large share of the people of prominence on their rolls. This is the nucleus of the index. Then, through trusted confidential helpers in each town, the names are checked off with signs showing what each individual can be depended on to do. Perhaps one man will be decidedly irreligious, and not interested in [political] reforms, but, for personal or family concerns may be greatly agitated over the question of temperance. The same may be

true with divorce legislation, and with Sunday questions of all kinds. The bureau has twelve lines of work, but it does not limit its requests for assistance to persons who happen to sympathize with it in all of its lines. Of course, the records show a large number of names as in favor of everything.

The Congressman who is "shaky" on any vital measure finds himself deluged with communications. Perhaps the churches in his district adopt resolutions which are forwarded to him. Petitions from the Women's Christian Temperance Unions are hastily transmitted. And there is no overestimating the influence of such things on the congressional mind....Senator Blackburn, of Kentucky, once said to Dr. Crafts: "Why, you have put my whole state in a turmoil over this matter. I would wager that I have got as many as twenty letters about it." Since twenty votes would not be a large percentage in Kentucky, the impression which a few letters make can not be better illustrated.

A few years ago, during the congressional recess, all of the wise men of this latitude were habitually ridiculing the idea that Congress could take any action regarding the duly elected representatives from the State of Utah. These wise men went into discussions of the constitutional phases of the question, and of how impossible it would be to do anything consistent with our fundamental law and the rights under it of a sovereign State. Any man who ventured to dissent from this prediction had but one argument: "Do not forget the Southern Presbyterianism. Brigham H. Roberts must look to his Democratic associates of the South for support, if he is to have any, but they can not forget the rugged Presbyterianism of a large share of their constituents." The prediction was entirely sound. There was little constitutional ground for throwing Mr. Roberts out, but he had to go, and this very Reform Bureau played no small part in bringing that result to pass.

Seven bills have been passed as drawn by the Bureau and introduced at its request, including the new and drastic divorce law of the District of Columbia, which will seemingly compel the establishment of a divorce colony at Chevy Chase, across the Maryland line. Others are the new divorce law in the Territories, the anti-canteen law, the resolution proposing a treaty to prevent the sale of intoxicants and opium to native races of the South Seas, and the Sunday-closing amendment to the St. Louis fair bill. The Bureau, by similar activities, doubtless prevents the passage of such legislation as might otherwise get through.--N.Y. Evening Post.

AUSTRIA'S TROUBLES.

It is stated that the Austrian Government has grave reason to fear an agrarian rising in Galicia, where in the last rising nearly two thousand landlords were murdered. The landlords of Galicia are Poles, and, being doubtless pressed by the low prices, are reducing wages already too low for even tolerable existence. The peasantry, who are Ruthenians, and have a traditional quarrel of race with the gentry, are therefore rioting in all directions; and there is a demand from the nobles that the province shall be placed in a state of siege. The demand will probably be granted, and the peasantry cannot resist the troops; but unless its views have greatly altered of late, the Government of Vienna will be greatly annoyed and perplexed, the Ruthenians being far more loyal to the house of Hapsburg than the Polish aristocracy are. This question of tenure is becoming a very serious one throughout Eastern Europe. From the Ural to the Danube the actual cultivators of the soil hardly get enough to live on, and, partly from suffering, partly from a growing consciousness that others are happier, are beginning to demand proprietary rights. A

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wealthy Government could manage a compromise through large loans, but in Eastern Europe there is no money to spare, and the policy adopted both in Russia and Austria is to enforce a nearly impossible status quo.--London Spectator.

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The industrial boom of recent years, combined with the phenomenal crops of this favored land, have tended to close the eyes of the world to the fact that the conditions of the gold standard are unfavorable to the agriculturists. As already pointed out, from Scripture, these conditions will not be changed by any political party; but will eventuate in the cry of the reapers, the agriculturists; and be followed by anarchy, which shall cause "all faces to gather blackness" and "the mighty man shall weep there bitterly"; --the time described as the "time of trouble, such as was not since there was a nation," in view of which the Apostle says: "Go to now ye rich men, weep and howl for the miseries which shall come upon you."-- James 5:1-4; Joel 2:6-11; Zeph. 1:14-18; Dan. 12:1.

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"MY COVENANT WILL I NOT BREAK."

"My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."--Psa. 89:34.

THESE WORDS of Jehovah God are very comforting and satisfying to his faithful children.

As faith becomes a basis for things hoped for, so confidence and experience constitute a basis for faith to rest upon. The unchangeableness of our God is one of the attractive features of his character: his assurance is, "I am the same, I change not." Even when the Lord's word or sentence is against us--as in the case of his pronouncement against sin and sinners --and even though his unchangeableness will not permit him to excuse sin or clear the guilty, this very constancy becomes an assurance to us that as God has been strict and unchangeable in regard to the penalty pronounced, he will be equally strict and equally unchangeable concerning all the good promises and covenants which he has made to us.

As an illustration of this unchangeableness, we note the fact that under the death sentence six thousand years have elapsed, and over 50,000,000,000 of our race have gone into the prisonhouse of death;--yet God has not relented or shown the slightest sign of change. His sentence was a just one, and it could not be revoked. Then came in his love; and without violating his justice he provided a great sin offering,-- "a ransom for all." In connection with this manifestation of love, in man's redemption, the Creator gave certain covenants and promises; and as we have learned of his unchangeableness in respect to the

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curse, the sentence, we learn proportionately to have confidence in his unchangeableness in respect to the promises he has made our race, based upon the great redemption effected for us.

"O, what comfort it brings,
My soul sweetly sings,
I am safe from all danger
While under his wings."

It is considered worldly wisdom to take for granted that no man will keep a covenant which he subsequently finds to be to his own disadvantage, unless he is bound by some kind of penalty--by the law. And those who have not learned to expect something of this kind of worldly wisdom in connection with their worldly affairs, have oftentimes been sadly disappointed and worsted; and their plans and arrangements based upon the covenants of others have been marred. The tendency of such experiences is to shake our confidence in humanity in general--and alas, sometimes, to shake our confidence even in some who have named the name of Christ and professed to be our brethren. Nevertheless, even such trying experiences

have always worked blessings to such of the Lord's children as have accepted them in the proper manner. Such have said to themselves, The more I find of unfaithfulness and injustice in mankind, the more do I appreciate the absolute faithfulness and justice of the Lord, and of such of his people as do prove themselves loyal to principle; and the more earnestly do I determine that my own course in life shall be such as will always acknowledge the principle of justice, and make my positive and finished bargain and engagement like our Lord's--unbreakable, unalterable.

The Lord indicates not only his own estimation of this principle, but his desire to see it in all who aspire to membership in his family. To such he says, "Blessed is the man who voweth to his own hurt and altereth not." The Lord would have us careful how we would make covenants, vows, either to him or to others; but having made them, his will is that we shall consider them sacred, inviolate; even though we should find subsequently that the arrangement was working out unfavorably as respects our temporal interests. There are some limitations in this direction which we will consider later on.

DIVINE COVENANTS AND PROMISES.

There is a difference between conditional and unconditional promises which should not be overlooked. Some of the Lord's covenants are conditional, as for instance, the Law Covenant, which

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begins, "If ye obey my laws and keep my statutes," etc., I will do thus and so unto you. The Covenant of the Law, while it did bring to Israel "much advantage every way, chiefly in that to them were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:1,2), was, nevertheless, a conditional covenant; and since Israel did not and could not keep its side of that covenant, therefore the divine promises attached to it and made conditional upon obedience, passed away so far as the people of Israel were concerned. All of the law's demand were met by our Lord Jesus, and to him and him alone passed all the divine agreements and obligations under that Covenant. The Lord has, however, made unconditional covenants with mankind: the first of these was through our representative, Noah, after the flood. As representing the race, God covenanted with Noah that he would never again destroy the world with a flood of waters; and the pledge of that covenant was the rainbow. It was wholly unconditional--it did not stipulate that no flood would come if Noah and his posterity would be faithful to the Lord, etc.

Another unconditional covenant was that made with Abraham which reads, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 12:3.) There are no conditions or limitations here. It does not say, If you and your seed will be faithful, I will bless all the families of the earth through them; nor does it say, If all the families of the earth will seek me, they shall be blessed through your seed. There are no conditions or limitations whatever. As a matter of fact, God knew from the beginning that the natural seed of Abraham would not be fit to be the channel of blessing. From the very beginning he foreknew Jesus as the seed of Abraham and the Head of the Gospel Church, his body--as unitedly the foreseen and promised "seed of Abraham." He foresaw, even, that many who would be called during this Gospel age would fail to make their calling and election sure; and from the very beginning he had in mind as the seed of Abraham only the "called and chosen and faithful."

God knew the end from the beginning, he knew that he would find such a class. He has been seeking them throughout this Gospel age, out of every kindred and people and tongue: he has been trying them, as the Apostle Peter says, with "fiery trials;" --proving their love and loyalty, and developing in them fruits and graces of spirit, in harmony with his own, such as will fit and prepare them as a whole, under their Lord and Head, for the great work of blessing the world, when the appointed time shall have fully arrived--during the Millennial age. Nor was it necessary to place limitations upon the blessing of all the families of the earth; because the blessing to be conferred upon all is not an everlasting one, but merely a blessing of knowledge, of opportunity, of assistance--to the intent that so many of mankind as will to do so may come to a full knowledge of the truth, into harmony with God, and to full perfection of being. Afterward they will be tested as to their loyalty, and only the worthy will be granted life everlasting --all others being ultimately destroyed in the Second Death. Evidently there was no necessity for putting conditions and limitations upon this covenant. It represents God's good and benevolent purposes toward our race. He knew that his only begotten Son would be glad to become man's Redeemer, for the joy that he would set before him; he knew also that, in the time appointed for it, he could find amongst mankind a sufficient number who would appreciate the privilege of fellowship and joint-heirship with their Redeemer, and gladly and faithfully endure the tests, and acquire the character necessary to this work of blessing which he had purposed in himself.

Another covenant mentioned in the Scriptures as an unconditional one was that made to Israel's king,

David--that his throne should be established forever --that of the fruit of his loins he would raise up a great one to sit on his throne in perpetuity. God could make this covenant without any limitations whatever, because he had already arranged that Jesus, according to the flesh, should be born of the house, of the lineage, of David and that his throne should be forever. David's throne, we are to remember, was the throne of the Lord, as we read, "Solomon sat upon the throne of the Lord in the room of his father David." God never acknowledged any throne in Israel except his own. It was entrusted to David for a time, and after him for a time to his posterity according to the flesh: it has been "overturned" during "the times of the Gentiles," but eventually, "he shall come whose right it is," and the Lord will give it unto him--the throne of the Lord, the throne of David. Indeed, even the name of David was a synonym for Immanuel, since its meaning is "Beloved." Christ is God's beloved Son in whom he is well pleased, and to whom, therefore, he has appointed the honors, dignities and authority of the Kingdom which is to bless all the families of the earth, according to the promises made to Abraham.

Another unconditional promise, or covenant, is called the "New Covenant." This one is also without limitations, without conditions; the divine Word says, "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I

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will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the Land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not [that being a conditional covenant], saith the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."--Heb. 8:8-12.

Nothing can be more clear than that this New Covenant is without a solitary condition, so far as the people to be blessed by it are concerned. It is a covenant or agreement wholly on one side--an unconditional promise on the Lord's part of what he will do for the world. We say for the world advisedly, because we are to remember that in respect to the Day of Atonement sacrifices and the blessings therefrom,

Israel is a type of all the world of mankind desiring to come into covenant relationship with the Lord, as the Levites represented the household of faith, and the priesthood was typical of the royal priesthood, the Church,--Jesus the High Priest, and consecrated believers the underpriesthood.--I Pet. 2:9.

What a wealth of blessing God has bound himself to accomplish for our race! How glad we are that there are no human conditions or limitations to hinder the fulfilment of these gracious promises, nor to unsettle our faith and our rejoicing therein! We do not mean to say that man will ultimately have nothing to do toward his own deliverance from sin and death; on the contrary, he will certainly not be delivered against his own will. But the blessings mentioned in these covenants are not the everlasting

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blessings pertaining to the eternity beyond the Millennium: they relate to the blessings of the Millennial age, which are, in divine providence, arranged to be world-wide--to include "all the families of the earth" for all of whom a blessing of knowledge and assistance and opportunity for return to divine favor has been provided by the Creator.

But how could God do this, may be inquired,-- if he is just and will not clear the guilty? How could he promise all these blessings and opportunities to those who are admittedly guilty--sinners? We answer that this part of the divine program and arrangement is specified particularly in the prophecy of Isaiah (42:1-7.) There Jehovah points out his honored servant, the Lord Jesus, through whose faithfulness the entire work of blessing the world shall be accomplished; and the key to the entire matter is found in the statement "I...will appoint thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the nations."--Vs. 6, Leeser.

Israel's experiences under the Law Covenant prove to us what God knew beforehand; namely, that the fallen race was so out of condition as to be unable to keep any covenant which he could properly make with them. The proposition, therefore, upon which the Abrahamic Covenant and the New Covenant are based, is that God would provide a substitute for Adam in the person of his well beloved Son, who, first demonstrating his own worthiness, would delight in carrying out his Father's plan for the blessing of our race: and with him God would make the covenant for the blessing of the world. As the world's representative, he would appoint or enter into a covenant with him, on behalf of the people. And to this our Lord assents, declaring that his death was "for the sins of the whole world" and that it was "the blood of the New Covenant" that sealed, made binding,

made effective, God's New Covenant. The New Covenant is given to Israel and the world only indirectly: the Father's dealings are not with Israel nor with the world under this New Covenant, but with the Mediator of the New Covenant,--the Christ. During this Gospel age he is accepting the Church as the members of the body of this great Mediator, through the merit of the Head. When the entire Mediator shall be complete, the covenant will come into force, become effective to all the families of the earth,--thus constituting the blessing mentioned in the covenant made with Abraham.

The curse of the divine sentence will then end, and divine favor and power will be given the great Mediator who shall then begin his great work of ruling and teaching mankind in righteousness, and administering laws and regulations for their benefit;--for their physical, social, mental and moral uplifting. The whole arrangement shall be in the hands of the Mediator and his work of helping and restoring the race which he purchased with his blood shall progress throughout the Millennial age. At the close of the Millennial age, having accomplished all that can possibly be accomplished for the race,--having brought all to a knowledge of the truth, having given all an opportunity of restoration to divine favor and restitution to perfection,--there will be a final testing on the Father's part, and all found worthy--all who

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shall have learned to appreciate the divine character and the principles of the divine law--will be granted life-everlasting; and all found contrary to this shall be esteemed wicked, and shall be destroyed from amongst the people.--Acts 3:23; Psa. 145:20.

"THAT WE MIGHT HAVE STRONG CONSOLATION, WHO HAVE FLED FOR REFUGE TO LAY HOLD UPON THE HOPE SET BEFORE US: WHICH HOPE WE HAVE AS AN ANCHOR OF THE SOUL, BOTH SURE AND STEADFAST."--HEB. 6:18,19.

The words of our text apply to these exceeding great and precious covenant-promises of the divine Word. They assure us that our God will never break these covenants--yea, more, that he will not even alter, or amend, or change them in any particular. We can rest in hope, assured that he who has begun the good work in us and on behalf of the world, is able not only to complete the work in us, but to accomplish more for the world than it or we can ask or comprehend. Does not this knowledge of the immutability of the divine covenants give us a confidence, a faith in the Lord which brings with it strong consolation for every trial, every difficulty, every disappointment of

this present time--assuring us that all of our experiences are working together as parts of a great whole of the divine program, not only for our glory, honor, immortality, but for the blessing of the world of mankind? They surely do! Hallelujah, what a Savior!

If now we allow our minds to gather in to some extent the scope of these promises as expanded and explained by the apostles in the New Testament, we see that they take hold of, not only the life which is to come, but also of that which now is. They give us new joy, new courage, new zeal, new incentive in connection with the common tasks and duties of life,--to our families, to our neighbors, and to ourselves, and above all to our God. And they give us confidence and assurance in all the great and gracious hopes set before us in the gospel--in the Lord's willingness to do for us, and in his power to do exceedingly and abundantly more than we can ask or think.

GODLIKE FAITHFULNESS TO COVENANTS.

In two ways we who are pupils in the school of Christ are instructed. (1) By being shown through the perfect law of liberty our weaknesses and imperfections. (2) By being shown God's greatness and perfection. We need to see that we are not right, that we come far short of the glorious condition in which we (in Adam) were created, and which condition alone God could pronounce or consider "very good." The longer and more intently we look into the perfect law of liberty, the more we will discern our own blemishes, and the less favorably we are likely to think of ourselves; so that we might become discouraged were it not for the Lord's assurance that while he knows our imperfections better than we do, yet he is not regarding these, but covering them--allowing the merit of our dear Redeemer as a robe of righteousness to make us perfect and acceptable before him;--and that this acceptance and covering applies to us as long as we are seeking to walk in the Lord's way--"not after the flesh, but after the spirit." We see the Lord's character portrayed in his law given to Israel; and again in the still higher statement of that law, expressed by Jesus as the perfect law, the comprehensive law, the Law of Love--God's law, necessarily representing his character. Furthermore, God's promises also represent his character, and this double revealing to us of the divine character is with a view to an incitement of our love for those principles of righteousness, goodness, truth.

While seeking to copy the Lord in every particular, and to be fully rounded out in character-likeness to him, let us now have specially in mind as a part of the lesson of this text, God's faithfulness to his engagements; and let us, as his people, resolve that by

his assistance and grace we will grow daily in this quality, in his likeness--that we, also, may say of ourselves, concerning our covenants or agreements, as the Lord says of himself, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."

COVENANTS--COMPLETE AND INCOMPLETE.

As there are some who are not sufficiently conscientious in their covenants and engagements--not sufficiently aware of the responsibilities assumed in making a covenant, and who are, therefore, disposed to break them or to alter them, so there are some, on the other hand, who have not their conscience sufficiently balanced by their other reasoning faculties to understand the difference between complete and incomplete agreements. These have need of a word of caution on what constitutes a final and irrevocable covenant, bargain, agreement. Mankind in general has long recognized the difference between the discussion of an agreement and the consummation of the same; hence it is that civil law, in the interest of peace and justice, makes the arrangement that in matters pertaining to the purchase or sale of real estate, a binding agreement or contract shall be in writing, and shall be signed and sealed as final and irrevocable. The conversation respecting the matter may progress for minutes, for hours, for weeks, for

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months, as the case may be, and one feature after another may be discussed pro and con, and terms may be discussed over and over,--but the bargain is not complete until the matter has been finally stated in writing in a manner acceptable to both parties, and their acceptance of the same indicated by their signatures, and the passing of some money or other consideration. Once such an absolute contract has been made, no child of God should think of breaking it, unless it should develop that he had been the subject of fraud and misrepresentation, and through this had been induced to sign. But the point we wish to make is, that there was a definite time when the covenant was made, after which it must not be broken, and that up to that time either party had the unquestionable right to alter, change, or amend his views respecting it and to act accordingly. The Lord's people should learn, more and more, to exercise the "spirit of a sound mind";--to think well of what they are about to do, before doing it;--and this implies also that they will seek for divine guidance in what they do. Indeed, having covenanted themselves to the Lord, with all of their interests and affairs, they are to treat every matter from this standpoint, and to consult the divine

will and to follow it to the best of their understanding, leaving all the subsequent consequences and results in the Lord's care.

A matter which sometimes has given rise to considerable

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difficulty among the Lord's people, is marriage engagements. There is confusion of thought as to how much obligation goes with an "engagement." Under the Jewish arrangement the betrothal preceded the marriage festivities by about a year, but the betrothal was really the marriage. It was discussed pro and con by the friends of the bride and bridegroom, and all particulars arranged and put into writing and signed. It was so binding that unfaithfulness on the part of the bride to her betrothal vows was punishable under the law. This Jewish custom was evidently arranged purposely to be a type of the betrothal of the Gospel Church to Christ, her heavenly Bridegroom. Our contract of union with the Lord, both on his part and ours, is entered into now, during the Gospel age, but the actual union or "nuptial feast," will not take place until, at his second advent, the entire company of the Bride shall have passed beyond the veil, "changed"--entered into the joys of her Lord. But marriage "engagements," as they are known amongst us to-day, are totally different from Jewish "betrothals."

According to our custom, the marriage covenant is entered into a legal manner either before an officer representing the civil authorities, or by a ceremony performed by a minister of the gospel. This is the marriage covenant; this is binding; this is unalterable; this must not be broken; the pledges here made must be observed, in letter and spirit. But the "engagements," which frequently last for weeks, months, or years preceding the marriage covenant, are not covenants at all--in the strict, proper sense of the word. They are merely provisional arrangements between the parties looking forward to a marriage covenant and ceremony as their consummation;--and so much so, that any treating of the "engagement" as a consummated union is declared illegal, unlawful. Of course it might be possible for two persons to make such vows to each other without the presence of a minister or other ceremony, as to be properly binding and obligatory throughout life; but this is unusual, extremely exceptional, and forbidden by State laws as contrary to general welfare.

The marriage "engagement," therefore, properly understood, is merely a provisional agreement between a man and a woman eligible to marriage, to keep each other's company with a view to marriage --with a view to such an intimate acquaintance with each other's characters, dispositions, affairs, etc., as

would give to each reasonable opportunity of judging as to the desirability of consummating a marriage covenant. Of course, this implies equally an opportunity and right to decide not to marry if in his or her judgment it would not be desirable. In breaking any ordinary agreement or "engagement" for marriage there is nothing, therefore, that is dishonorable or covenant breaking,--but everything that is reasonable, right, proper. It is in the interests of both parties that it should be so. If either party is disposed to cancel the "engagement," it would certainly be unwise, as well as unjust, for the other party to selfishly insist on consummating it with a marriage covenant, which would be binding; because a marriage is only for those who are one, and if either party feels to the contrary of this, it is the very best reason why both should conclude they are not one in their interests, tastes, preferences, etc.

We mention this matter here particularly because it is a question that is frequently referred to us by persons engaged to be married at the time the truth reaches them. They come to see matters in a new light: life comes to have a new meaning for them under the illumination of the truth, and marriage comes to have a new force and weight; a decision respecting a partner in life comes to be a question in which the Lord's will is recognized as paramount. The other party to the engagement generally fails to see the change in conditions, and perhaps admires the

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proposed companion all the more, because of the graces which the truth adds to character. The unregenerate may perhaps incline to be insistent, and to urge that it would be wrong for the Christian to break an "engagement." This is unsound reasoning, wholly sophistical; and those who use it are generally fully aware of this; and yet it is sufficient at times to cause great trouble of conscience to some who are anxious to fulfil their obligations in every particular.

This is our justification for these extended remarks on this phase of the subject.

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GIDEON'S BAND TRIUMPHANT.

--JUDGES 7:1-8--NOVEMBER 30--

"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man."--Psa. 118:8.

GIDEON was one of the judges of Israel raised up by the Lord. He delivered his people from the Midianites who had invaded Palestine and taken possession of its most fertile part, pillaging the country of its produce. Under God's special covenant with Israel we know that he would have protected them from these invaders had they remained faithful to him. We are not surprised, therefore, that the narrative shows that the Israelites at this time had succumbed to the idolatrous influences of the Canaanites who still dwelt in the land. Gideon's father was one of the chief men of his tribe and district, and upon his plantation he had erected a statue to Baal in the midst of a consecrated grove, on a hilltop. Notwithstanding this established idolatry in the home, Gideon appears to have had considerable knowledge of the true God and of the deliverances effected by him for his people in the past, and when conversing with his angel visitor he shows not only his knowledge of the Lord's dealings in the past, but his surprise that he had ceased to care for his people. It did not seem even to occur to him that the Lord's disfavor, as manifested in the successes of the Midianites against Israel, was on account of Israel's disloyalty to the Lord in idolatry, etc. It is probable that this same sentiment pervaded the nation in general and that, in some sense of the word, they respected Jehovah at the same time they worshipped Baal also.

God's favors to spiritual Israel and his protection are along spiritual lines against spiritual enemies and spiritual difficulties; and yet, how few spiritual Israelites when they get into spiritual difficulties realize that it must, in some sense of the word, be traceable to the Lord's providences! How few of them properly look to see to what extent their spiritual adversities, weaknesses, coldness, alienation from the Lord, etc., are due to the permission of some kind of idolatry in their hearts! Not an idolatry, probably, that entirely ignores the Lord; but one which, while thinking favorably of his spiritual blessings and victories of the past, simply wonders at his disfavor of the present, and fails to recognize that it is impossible to serve at the same time both God and Mammon; that God's favor and close communion and protection can not be expected while we permit in our hearts a rival reverence for wealth or fame or human institutions and creeds, or self or family, to any degree or extent.

Evidently the Lord saw that the Israelites were at this time ripe for a change;--that under the adversities inflicted through their enemies they were humbled to such an extent that they would be ready to see where was their fault, and to turn from idolatry again to the Lord. But the Lord wished an agent for his service, and instead of using a supernatural one--an angel--he chose, as usual, to use a man. And he

chose, as usual, to use a suitable man, fit for the purpose. Gideon would seem to have been a man of middle age, for he had a son at this time of probably fifteen years of age; he was well born, as is implied by the record that he was fine of form and feature.

True, the adage is "handsome is, that handsome does"; it is true, too, that some who are handsome fail to measure up to their appearance in the conduct of life; nevertheless, it is beyond question that to those who can read character, the face and form, unless marred by accident, indicate the character and the training. The noble, the brave, the generous, the wise, by nature, by birth, show these qualities in feature and form; nevertheless God is not always able to use as his servants the naturally noblest and finest of the human family: too frequently with such nobility goes a spirit of pride and self-conceit, which renders the individual unsuited to the Lord's purposes of the present time, when humility and obedience to the Lord are the prime essentials. The Apostle noted this, saying that not many wise, not many noble, not many learned hath God chosen, but the weak things and the ignoble things--rich in faith, heirs of the Kingdom. (I Cor. 1:26.) How gracious is this arrangement which opens the way to the highest divine favor for the humblest who hears the voice of the Lord and responds thereto with humility and zeal! Let the ignoble, then, who have tasted of the Lord's grace, be encouraged to trust that even though ignoble by nature the grace of the Lord is able to work in them such a transformation of character that they may in heart, at least, become copies of God's dear Son, and thus be prepared for the finishing touches of our promised "change" in the First Resurrection.

As Gideon's band may be considered a figure or illustration of the overcomers of this Gospel age, the Church, the little flock,--so Gideon himself would fitly represent the Captain of our salvation, whose example we are to follow, and whose character is to impress all his followers. Of Gideon it is declared that he looked like a king's son--that in appearance, form, etc., he had a nobility which marked him as above the ordinary rank and file. So our Lord Jesus is the King's Son, and so all whom he accepts to be of his little band, his little flock, are to be conformed to his image by the power of God working in them "to will

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and do of his good pleasure;" working in them through a knowledge of the truth;--the knowledge of the exceeding great and precious promises of God's Word. Whatever they are by nature, it is God's design that eventually they shall be like their Lord and Captain, see him as he is and share his glory, honor and immortality.

After receiving the Lord's invitation to be the deliverer of his people, Gideon also received a test: he was to hew down the trees constituting the grove of Baal and was to overthrow the statue and was to offer to the Lord sacrifices upon a rock, using the wood from Baal's grove and image as the fuel. Sure that he was following the Lord's command, he did not wait to gain even the consent of his father, much less that of his people in that vicinity who he knew would be greatly incensed by such a procedure. Assuring himself that his commands were of the Lord, he hesitated not one moment but accomplished the destruction and made the offering, doing the work by night knowing it would be interrupted by the people if done in the day time. The citizens of his clan demanded his life, appealing the matter to his father who, evidently, was a chief amongst them; but the wise decision of the father was that if Baal could not defend himself against his son, there was certainly no need of any one taking up the cause of Baal.

Thus the Lord protected the one whom he had chosen for his servant and brought him more markedly than ever before the attention of the people, so that when he sent out invitations for volunteers from various quarters, an army of thirty-odd thousand assembled to his standard. Then came the sifting which is particularly noted in this lesson; (1) Gideon's army had a chance to see the hosts of the enemy, more than five times as numerous; (2) they had a chance to consider that their enemies were used to warfare while they as a people had for now a long time been accustomed to the peaceable pursuits of agriculture. When, therefore, Gideon requested that as many as felt fearful should withdraw, it depleted his army to the extent of two-thirds; yet many if not all of these who first volunteered but were now rejected, probably had an opportunity a little later on of joining in the battle after the Midianites had been discomfited and were in full retreat. But the ten thousand courageous men, fearless in the presence of an enemy many times their own strength, must have been men of faith in the Lord, men who, in some respects at least, resembled Gideon, in their hearts, in their courage, in their trust in Jehovah; nevertheless there were still too many for the Lord's purpose, and a thorough sifting was made by which the Lord separated three hundred of their number for his special service under Gideon.

The selection of Gideon's little flock reminds us of the selection of the Lord's spiritual people. Of these there is first a call to faith in the Lord, resulting in justification and acceptance; secondly, there is a call to consecration, in full view of the requirements, in full view of the enemy, and our Captain requests all of the justified ones who come to him to sit down first and count the cost, whether or not they are willing

to sacrifice their all under his leadership. The large majority when they come to see the cost, to realize the battle that must be waged between the followers of the Lord and the forces of the world, the flesh and the Devil, are rather inclined to say, We prefer not to engage in battle, we are timid, we are fearful, we have not sufficient confidence either in Gideon or Gideon's God. It is in accord with the Lord's will that such should be considered separate from God's army, though they may have subsequently an opportunity for joining in the battle against evil.

It is not sufficient that we should have faith in the Lord and in the Captain of our salvation and should make our consecration to the Lord's will; but further tests are made with the view to making a final selection of a very special class to constitute the little flock. It will be the test of water--symbolizing the truth; it becomes a very important question to every consecrated one as he is brought to a knowledge of the truth how he will receive it,--appropriate it: in the picture or type those accepted of God to be Gideon's little flock, used their hands to lift the water to their mouths, a sup at a time as a dog uses his tongue to lift the water; while the others drank like as a horse who puts his mouth into the water and sucks it. The hand is a symbol of energy and we might understand this to signify that the persons most approved of the Lord, will use energy and discretion in partaking of the truth--these will not bow down in the mire of human servility, but will maintain their own erectness of manhood and will partake of the water of truth, lifting their heads upward and acknowledging its heavenly origin by whatever stream or channel it may come to them.

The selection complete, the remainder of the brave men were not sent home but to Gideon's tent, or headquarters, there to be ready for their share in the battle later. Those whom God would specially use were supplied with peculiar implements; first a ram's horn; secondly, a pitcher; thirdly, a lamp, or torch, placed inside the pitcher and thus obscured from the view of their enemies. The three hundred were divided into three companies and the individuals of each company were scattered. They approached close to the enemy and practically surrounded their camp; when Gideon blew, all who heard the blast gave similar blasts upon their trumpets; when Gideon broke his pitcher and let the light of his torch or firebrand gleam forth, the others did the same, blowing meantime with their trumpets and alternately shouting, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." It was the Lord's battle and the Lord's arrangement and it carried out as intended; the Midianites awakened from their slumbers, panic stricken, believed themselves surrounded by immense hosts, and fled precipitately, killing one another in their fright and confusion.

Perceiving the routes they would take, Gideon hastened with his ten thousand followers to intercept them and to complete the defeat. Meanwhile others of the people, learning of the condition of things, joined in the battle to the ultimate and utter discomfiture

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of the Midianites, and the destruction of the vast majority of their hosts, including their leaders.

Our Captain, the Lord, has given special instructions to those whom he will specially use in the conflict of evil now in progress. Each one shall follow the example of the Captain of our salvation; first, he shall blow upon the trumpet representing the proclamation of the truth, and that the sword of the spirit of truth is of Jehovah and of his anointed Son, and secondly, they shall break their pitchers and let their light shine out. The pitchers represent our earthen vessels, and the breaking of them in order to let the light shine out signifies that to which we are exhorted by the Apostle; saying, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, your reasonable service." We see how our Chief-Captain broke his earthen vessel; we see what a light streamed forth. Our highest ambition must be to follow his example, to walk in his steps, to lay down our lives for the brethren as he laid down his life for us. Meantime the blowing of the trumpet is to progress and the shouting in the name of Jehovah, our Captain, and the sword of the spirit of truth is to be wielded;--the result will be victory; the enemies of the Lord will be overwhelmed.

But many others than the little flock will be associated in the work of overthrow, though theirs will be a special work as specially chosen instruments of the Lord. Now is the time for response to the call of our Captain; now is the time for standing the tests and being full of faith and confidence in the Lord, that he is able to give us the victory. Now is the time for standing the test of truth, accepting it as from the Lord and lifting our hearts in gratitude. Now is the time for understanding the will of the Captain, following his example, and imitating him and laying down our lives for the brethren, and as sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God and our reasonable service. Now is the time for the proclamation and for publicly declaring our confidence in him who called us, who gave us the light and who has privileged us to be his little flock; and very shortly will come the time for the fleeing of the enemy. Let us be faithful to our tests and opportunities, and thus be accounted worthy of a share in the service and the glory that shall follow.

"THY PEOPLE SHALL BE MY PEOPLE."

--RUTH 1:16-22--DECEMBER 7--

"Be kindly affectioned one toward another."--Rom. 12:10.

WHILE THE BOOK OF RUTH is not prophetic, but merely historical, it is valuable to us in various ways. (1) It furnishes an important link in the chronological chain leading down to King David and, hence, a part of the chronological line leading down to the Man Christ Jesus. (2) It gives a glimpse of the habits and customs of the Israelites in general as an agricultural people. In this respect it is in marked contrast with the Books of Judges, Kings and Chronicles, which dealt more particularly with the rulers, generals and wars. (3) The story of Ruth points a very beautiful lesson of fidelity, sympathy and love amongst the people at that time, and inculcates a similar lesson of kindness of disposition amongst the spiritual Israelites, guaranteeing them, along this line, blessings both for the present and for the future.

Somewhere about Gideon's time, when scarcity amounting almost to famine prevailed in Palestine, as a judgment of the Lord upon his people for some measure of coldness or unfaithfulness to him and to their covenant, Naomi's husband determined to emigrate with his family to the other side of the Dead Sea--to the land of Moab. The Moabites were the descendants of Lot, but, nevertheless, the Lord marked out to his people Israel that they were not to be considered the children of Abraham--that they were not fellow-heirs of the promises made to Abraham, and, therefore, they were not subjects of special dealings, disciplines, providences, etc., as were the Israelites. Naomi and her two sons went with her husband apparently without regret, to the land of Moab, hoping thereby to better the prospects of the family. It was a mistake, however, as she afterwards realized, to attempt to regulate their own affairs when they were specially under the Lord's protection and guidance.

As Israelites they should have esteemed the divine promises so highly that they would not have left the land of promise and the people of promise to commingle with those who were strangers to those promises and more or less idolaters. To be on the Lord's side amongst the Lord's people should have been esteemed far more important than earthly prospects. Naomi, however, is not to blame in connection with this matter; the responsibility rested with her husband, and it is evident that her heart was never fully in sympathy with the move, because about ten years subsequently,

when her husband and two sons died, she promptly determined on a return to the Lord's people and to the land which he had given them.

Human nature is much the same everywhere and always. How many there are to-day who mistakenly seek to map out their plans for the present life in disregard of their highest interests, in disregard of the Lord's promises and the relationship which they have entered into by covenant with him! How many there are who forget that the Lord's arrangement with all of

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his covenant people is that he will supervise their affairs and cause all things to work together for good to them! Instead of making temporal interests the chief concern, Naomi's husband should have been making the religious interests of himself and family his chief concern, so that if he had been living in Moab under greater prosperity, he should rather have been willing to go into the land of promise amongst the Lord's people, though such a course would seem to mean a blighting of some of his earthly interests.

The Lord's people of Spiritual Israel will do well to bear this thought continually in mind--that spiritual interests are to be given the preference always; that temporal affairs are to be managed and controlled from the standpoint of the everlasting welfare;--from the standpoint of spiritual growth and development and prosperity;--from the standpoint of the best interests and influences upon their children. They should not only hesitate to follow any suggestion that would take themselves and their families into unfavorable, godless surroundings, but they should determine that not under any consideration would they follow such a

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suggestion;--that on the contrary the Lord's people should be their people, even though this meant less of the comforts and luxuries of this present life: it would surely mean greater spiritual blessings and favors for the present time, and persevering would mean the gaining of the glorious reward which our Lord has promised to the faithful who love him more than they love houses and lands and kindred, etc.

Evidently Naomi's life and example and her faithfulness to the Lord had made an impression amongst those with whom she was specially in contact,--her two daughters-in-law, both of whom resolved to go back with her to the land of Canaan. On the journey, however, she reflected that these two young women would be sacrificing much--leaving kindred, homes, acquaintances, customs, and good prospects to go with her to a land where they would be considered foreigners and probably be discriminated against. She, therefore,

urged them to return to their own people, to the religious worship, etc., to which they had been accustomed.

She feared that their resolution to accompany her would result in disappointment later on.

Her disinterested course in this matter reminds us very much of our Lord's words to some who proposed to become his disciples. He advised them first of all to sit down and count the cost; this he did, not because he wished to stumble or to turn back any who had inclinations to follow in his footsteps, but because it is best on general principles that people should not undertake that in which their hearts are not fully and deeply interested; because, otherwise, they are sure to make a failure. They who sit down and count the cost and then rejoicingly follow in the Lord's footsteps of suffering and trial, glad to be accounted worthy to suffer for his name's sake, and to walk in his footsteps, --they alone are the kind who will gain the prize.

Those who would follow without the spirit of sacrifice would be sure to miss the prize, and all the sacrificing they might do would be burdensome and measurably disappointing.

Naomi's argument appealed to one of her daughters-in-law, who did return to her Moabitish home, concluding that after all it would be too much of a sacrifice for her to part with her kindred, etc. Ruth, on the contrary, had come to love her mother-in-law so deeply and to respect her religion so thoroughly that although it cost a tear to part with home and kindred and to contemplate the trials of poverty in a foreign land, she, nevertheless, fully resolved that such a home amongst those who revered the true God and were heirs of his promises was more to be esteemed than anything she was leaving. Her impassioned words to her mother-in-law are noted throughout the world as being amongst the most beautiful expressions of sympathy, kindness and devotion. Some one has arranged them in poetic form, thus:--

"Entreat me not to leave thee,
And to return from following after thee;
For whither thou goest, I will go;
And where thou lodgest, I will lodge;
Thy people shall be my people,
And thy God, my God;
Where thou diest I will die, and there will I be
buried.

The Lord do so to me, and more also,
If aught but death part thee and me."--Vs. 16,17.

A good and faithful, God-fearing, God-serving, God-honoring mother-in-law, Naomi surely was, to have so deeply interested Ruth in herself and in her God and in his promises to her people. There is a lesson here, not only for mothers-in-law, but for all of the Lord's people. Not all are able to preach and to teach the Word of God publicly or privately, but all can teach through their daily lives and

glorify their Father in heaven in their bodies and spirits which are his, by living a godly life, by telling in the simplest manner of the hopes and promises which control their own hearts and inspire their own courage and devotion. The Apostle Paul had in mind this same thought of the general influence of life and character when he said, "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ." Our Lord had the same thought in mind when he declared, "Ye are the light of the world....Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." That Naomi had told her

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daughters-in-law respecting her God and his promises to his people is evident; but to have told them of this and not to have acted and spoken and lived in accord with this faith and hope, would have been contradictory and, undoubtedly, never would have influenced Ruth to forsake her own people and her father's house, and to cast in her lot with her mother-in-law and the Israelites.

Arrived at her home city, Bethlehem, Naomi, who had been well known ten years before, and whose friends probably never expected to see her again, was greeted by her name; but she replied, Call me no longer Naomi (which signifies lovable, pleasant), but call me rather Marah (which signifies bitter). She explained to them that the Lord's providences in respect to her affairs had been severe afflictions;--the Lord had testified against her course--had not prospered herself and family in the course they had taken. No doubt later on she came to see that the Lord's afflictions upon her had really been for her good, bringing her back to the land of promise and to fellowship with her people, so that her last days were probably the best of her life.

So at times it may be with some of the Lord's spiritual Israelites; his chastisements and afflictions and disciplines may seem to indicate his displeasure, but really, from the standpoint of faith and knowledge, they may afterward be seen to have been blessings in disguise. However, much depends upon the way in which the Lord's disciplines are received. Had Naomi suffered herself to become sour and morose and rebellious against the Lord, no blessing would have followed her trying experiences; but the fact that she permitted these to draw her closer to the Lord and to his people formed the channel of her blessings. And this lesson also is easily applied by us all as spiritual Israelites to our experiences.

The remainder of the lesson gives us an insight into the customs of the time, and incidentally shows us how the Lord rewarded the noble character and faith of Ruth. That she did not come to Bethlehem

with great expectations and selfish motives is evidenced by the fact that she set out to earn a living for herself and her mother-in-law. She was young and strong, and could, after the manner of the times, go into the harvest fields and glean such stray handfuls of the grain as were missed by the men who did the reaping. This was permitted by the Jewish law; the grain growing in the fence corners might be gathered by any of the poor for their own use. Providentially Ruth was guided in her humble efforts to make a living, to the field of a man who was a kinsman to Naomi, and to whom she (Ruth) was subsequently married and became one of the mothers in Israel, from whom descended King David and ultimately Mary, the mother of Jesus.

It is well that the Lord's people note even in this little incident something that may be helpful to them. We are to commit our way to the Lord and sincerely and unselfishly determine to follow the path of righteousness; then the Lord shall be our God; then his people shall be our people. Testings will come as to whether or not we are willing to do our duty in respect to the common affairs of life, laboring with our hands, providing things honest in the sight of all men. As we go forward in the line of duty, the Lord guides our steps and overrules in our affairs and brings us blessings, but if we fail to take the proper steps and to do with our might what our hands find to do, we miss the blessings.

The fact that these two women could journey from Moab to Bethlehem by themselves and without molestation, and the fact that Ruth, unknown and unprotected, could safely glean in the fields without interference of any kind, speaks to us strongly of the general law and order prevalent amongst the Israelites--the general recognition of the divine law and the general conformity thereto. We are to remember, too, that at this time the laws were liberally administered, and that, so far as we are made aware, there was neither army or police organization to enforce them. The people were comparatively free and evidently in some respects moral, noble and trustworthy. This is illustrated further in the course of Boaz. How few employers of labor to-day, as they visit their farms, would be in any degree inclined to salute their laborers as Boaz did his; saying, "The Lord be with you!" And how few farm laborers of to-day would respond as did these of Boaz; --"They answered him, The Lord bless thee." Evidently the employers and employees of our day could learn some profitable lessons from the past, notwithstanding the fact that Evolutionists would endeavor to convince us that back in the days of Boaz men must have been much nearer the monkey condition than to-day. The facts are to the contrary.

Furthermore, we notice the generosity of Boaz, that instead of dealing selfishly and miserly in respect

to the gleanings of the woman, he gave directions to his servants that they purposely let fall an occasional handful when binding the grain, that Ruth's gleanings might thus be enlarged. Christian employers and employees need not to go back to the Jewish Law and to the customs of the Jews as illustrated by Boaz and his laborers; for we have a still higher law and much

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advantage every way over them. If their knowledge of the Lord led them to kindly salutations and kindly actions, much more should the Christian's greater knowledge of the divine will and his anointing of the holy spirit enable him to be kind, considerate and affectionate toward others--doing good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially to the household of faith.

Our Golden Text is an exhortation to spiritual Israelites and is in full accord with the sentiments of this lesson as witnessed by the conduct of Naomi and Ruth and Boaz and his laborers. Let us with increasing light and knowledge and privilege make still further progress in all the fruits of the spirit of love.

Finally,--It is unsafe to neglect to have the Lord for our God, and to neglect to make his people our people. Acceptance of the Lord means ultimately a change in all of life's interests and affairs if we would abide in his love and favor. The sacrifice of earthly things may cost us tears and heart-aches at first; but eventually we will be more than compensated--as was Ruth, only in higher, spiritual blessings.

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