

The Berean Christadelphian

A monthly magazine devoted wholly to the exposition and defence of the Faith once for all delivered to the Saints, with the object of helping to make ready a People prepared for the coming of the Lord. Opposed to the unscriptural teachings of the papal and protestant churches of the world.

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“They received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many believed”—Acts 17: 11.

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CHRIST IS COMING AND WILL REIGN ON EARTH

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How Well Do We Build?

No. 2

If our consideration of the Tabernacle was interesting and instructive, we will find the Temple equally so if we give it some careful thought. It must be remembered that both buildings were designed to form the centre of Israel's national life.

Every builder realizes the importance of a good foundation. In view of this, those who construct large and very tall buildings always look for solid rock upon which to lay their foundations. Although not much detailed information is given about the foundation of the Temple, we do learn that (1 Kgs. 5:17)—

"The king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house."

In describing this work, Josephus said, "King Solomon laid the foundation of the temple very deep in the ground. The materials were strong stones, such as would resist the force of time. These were to unite themselves with the earth, and become a basis and a sure foundation for the building."

In support of this, recent investigators state, "The result of our investigation shows that the foundation was sunk to an astonishing depth, and composed of stones of singular magnitude, and very durable. Being closely *mortised into the rock* with great ingenuity, they formed a basis adequate to support the structure."

In addition to the foundation, the building also was constructed of stone, and so perfectly prepared that, when they were brought to the site of the Temple,

"The house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building"—1 Kings 6:7.

It must have been a magnificent building—not distinguished by magnitude, but by its marvellous architectural proportions, beauty of workmanship, and costliness of materials. It is important to bear in mind that the plans for this building were of divine origin. Giving the instructions to Solomon, David said (1 Chr. 28:10 & 19):

"Take heed now; for the Lord hath chosen thee to build an house for the Sanctuary: be strong, and do it . . .

"All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern."

Much wisdom and instruction lies hidden in the construction of the Temple. Therefore, because of the scriptural principle and relation of natural to spiritual, shadow to substance, and type to antitype, it will benefit us to look at some of these features.

Looking upon the structure in its completeness, we learn first that the rock, upon which the foundation rested, represents God. Moses speaks of Him as "the Rock of Salvation," and David asks, "Who is a Rock save our God?" Isaiah's beautiful reference to the Rock comes to us in the song that is sung in the land of Judah, in the times of restitution of all things—

"Trust ye in Yahweh unto futurity—for in Yah, Yahweh is a rock of ages"—Isa. 26:4 (Rotherham's translation).

The next step in this building, and an extremely important one, is the foundation. Paul helps us to understand the type by his letter to the Ephesians, where he says (Eph. 2:19-21)—

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple."

When Paul speaks of a corner stone, he does not refer to the decorative stones used in building today. The chief corner stone of an ancient building was a large and massive stone so formed as when placed at a corner, to bind together two outer walls of an edifice. Here, then, we have one wall represented by the prophets, and the other one by the apostles, bound together by Jesus, the chief Corner Stone. But Jesus is not an ordinary corner stone:

"Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste."

This is a comprehensive prophecy. The stone has been tried, but it has not yet been laid in Zion, except in the prophetic sense. At the present, he is a "*stone of stumbling*" to both Jew and Gentile. Peter quotes from this prophecy, and then says (1:2:7-8)—

"Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made head of the corner, and a rock of offence, even to them that stumble at the Word being disobedient."

Because of our reference to Paul's letter to the Ephesians, the reader will, no doubt, anticipate what we have to say about the super-structure of the Temple. Yes, it represents the Household of God that is being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, of which Jesus is the chief corner stone.

The saints will constitute the structure—*an house not made with hands*. Peter speaks of them as lively, or living stones, every one precious, and selected. Cut out of the mountain of humanity, from

every nation and tongue, they will be made ready—"builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

The stones, in the temple of Solomon, were made ready before being brought to the site of the building. All of the shaping, and polishing, was completed—nothing was left undone. Solomon followed all the works of the pattern which God had made known to his father David. In like manner, the pattern has been set in the Scriptures of Truth for all who have a strong desire to become living stones in the Temple of the Age to Come.

It is also the time for us to ask ourselves if we are satisfied to remain among the "many who are called," or if we are determined to do all in our power to be among the "few who will be chosen?" We cannot expect to be among the "chosen" unless we follow the divine specifications. *Let us not give up because others do, but let us "be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain"* —Editor

Apocalypse

By brother John Thomas

PART TWO

Another place in Paul's writings where he uses this noun in a notable manner is 2 Thes. 1:7. He there tells his persecuted brethren that God will recompense to them—

". . . a rest with us (Paul, Sylvanus, and Timothy) in the **apocalypse** of the Lord Jesus from heaven, with angels of his power, in fire of flame, inflicting vengeance on those who know not God, and who obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Anointed; who shall suffer punishment, Aion-destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his might, when he shall come to be glorified with his Saints, and to be admired with all the believers in that day."

In the next chapter, v. 8, he informs the reader that a certain power would exist, contemporary with the apocalypse of that day, which should be wasted and destroyed. He styles it THE LAWLESS ONE, "whom," says he,

". . . the Lord shall consume by the spirit of his mouth, and destroy by the manifestation of his presence."

In writing to the faithful, Peter also directs their attention to "the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ" as the time when their faith should be "found unto praise and glory." He exhorts them to—

"Hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought in the **apocalypse of Jesus Christ.**"

—and in a third place of the same epistle he says,

"Rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that in the **apocalypse of his glory**, ye may be glad also, leaping for joy" (1 Pet. 1:7, 13; 4:13).

It must be evident, then, to all who have examined the testimonies adduced, that *apocalypse*, in N.T. use, is not used indefinitely or vaguely, importing merely a disclosure or uncovering of ideas previously concealed: but that it has a **special and appropriated import**—a doctrinal meaning peculiar to itself; teaching,

1. The introduction of a DAY, styled the Day of Apocalypse;
2. The manifestation in that day of a LIGHT for the Apocalypse of Nations;
3. The inflicting of vengeance and punishment of the lawless and disobedient in that day;

4. The personal appearance of Jesus Christ, as the Light of the Day of Wrath and Apocalypse;
5. The manifestation of the Sons of God by resurrection from among the dead, and glorification with Jesus Christ—the Apocalypse of Salvation in the last time.

For the things indicated in these points, the believers who received their enlightenment through the personal labors of the apostles, *waited and earnestly longed*; as they have also who, in succeeding ages and generations, have been instructed in the Truth by their writings in connection with those of Moses and the Prophets. With believers of *this class* the question uppermost in their minds has ever been,

"O Lord, **how long? How long** shall the adversary reproach?

"**How long**, O Jehovah; wilt Thou hide Thyself for ever?"

"**How long**, O Jehovah, how long shall the wicked exult?"

"Return, O Jehovah, **how long? How long** are Thy servants to wait for Thy return?" (Psa. 74:10; 89:46; 90:13; 94:3).

Isaiah had a vision of the Adon, the *I SHALL BE of Armies*, sitting upon His throne, at a time when the whole earth shall be full of His glory. He says:

"Mine eyes have seen the King, the Jehovah of armies!"

At the same time he heard a declaration announcing a punishment to be inflicted upon the tribes of Israel, because they would not understand and perceive the Truth in the day of the King's visitation. Fatness of heart, heaviness of ears, and blindness were to come upon them, as at this day. So long as it continued, the earth's fulness of glory would be deferred. The prophet was greatly afflicted at this, and exclaimed,

"Woe is me! For I am cut off; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." Then, said I, Lord **how long?** (ch. 6).

Over 200 years afterwards the same inquiry was made in the hearing of Daniel, and in effect by Daniel himself. The long night of Israel's darkness foreseen by Isaiah to come upon them after the rejection of Jehovah's Messenger, who was to say to them:

"Ye hear in hearing, but do not understand; and ye see in seeing, but do not perceive." (Matt. 13:13).

—is characterized in Daniel by *the absence of sacrifice, the desolation of the land, and the dispersion and oppression of the nation* (Dan. 8:11-13; 9:26-27; 12:7).

It had been revealed to Daniel that a powerful and indestructible Kingdom should be set up by the God of heaven, which should consume and destroy everything that stood up against it; that the Son of man and the Saints should possess it, with dominion over the whole earth; and that then power should be restored to the Hebrew nation, which should never again be broken.

But before all this could begin to come to pass, he saw a long period of affliction. It was therefore desired to know when it should terminate; as terminate it must before the glory can be apocalypsed or revealed. "*How long,*" then it was asked—

". . . shall the Little Horn of the Goat practice and prosper against the Holy Land and the Host of Israel?"

—for this is in effect the question of v. 13. How long till the arrival of the period when the Holy shall be avenged? The answer to this question only bringing the inquirer to the period in which the

vengeance is to be developed, it was still desired to know further "How long to the *end* of the wonders" to be developed in "the time of the end"?

The answer was by the specification of a *period*, and an *event*: "For a time, times and a half." This is the duration of the period, constituting the latter portion of what Jesus Christ terms "the Times of the Gentiles," during which Jerusalem and the Saints were to be trodden under foot (Luke 21:24), and symbolized by—

"The Court which is without the Temple, given to the Gentiles for 42 months" (Rev. 11:2).

The *event* that marks the end of the period is THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL, which is thus expressed,

"When he (Michael the Great Prince that liveth for the Aion) shall have finished the scattering of the power of the Holy People, all these times shall be finished."

But still the question admitted of repetition. True, in the "Time of the End"—and at that crisis of it when the King of the North (as the Imperial Horn of the Grecian Goat) shall be broken with an end of power by Michael in standing up to deliver Israel—"the time, times, and a half" shall conclude. But then, "How long," said Daniel, "to the end of these?" They shall end at the delivering of Israel; but *how many years from Daniel's time* shall it be to that redemption?

The rejoinder which Daniel received to the question, "How long to the end of these?" is remarkable. He was not informed how long. He was told instead to "Go:" and the reason given for telling him to depart in ignorance of the end of the times, was that "the words were sealed up and closed *till the Time of the End*."

The words of a book sealed up and closed could not be read. Daniel declares that he did not understand. He did not understand the times of the winding up of the visions he had seen. He did not understand *when* the Stone would smite Nebuchadnezzar's Image; nor *when* the Saints would break the power of the Little Horn, and take the dominion under the whole heaven. He did not understand when, or in what year of the world's age, Michael should deliver Israel and raise the dead. "I heard," says he, "but I understood not." The answer to, "How long?" was still deferred.

Daniel, however, did not depart in despair. He was told that the Daily Sacrifice should be taken away to make room for a desolating abomination, or power, which should prosper for 1290 years; and that 45 years after that period should close, "many of them that sleep in the dust" should "awake to the life of the Olahm or Aion;" and that then he should arise to his inheritance.

The Apocalypse revives this ancient question in 6:10. In this place, those in Christ slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony they held, are represented as crying with a loud voice:

"How long, O Despot, holy and true, does Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth?"

In answer to this appeal, they were told that they must "rest yet *a little while*;" and in ch. 18 we find the "little while," in its allegorical allusion, fulfilled in the avenging of the Saints upon the Apostasy in the judgment of the Great Harlot by whom all the nations have been intoxicated and deceived.

From what has been hitherto presented, we presume that the reader will have discerned that the great question generated in the minds of those who believed the Gospel the apostles preached, was:

"What are the times and the seasons; and what the signs indicative of the appearing of Jesus Christ in his Kingdom and glory?"

The Apocalypse, we would remark, was communicated for the purpose of imparting information to the servants of God in relation to the times, seasons, and signs, which till then were reserved with the Father. Being herein revealed, *THEY ARE EXPECTED TO STUDY IT*, that they may be able to discern the signs of the times as they arrive, that when the great crisis comes, they may not be taken by surprise.

God Hath Spoken

“God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son”—Heb. 1:1-2.

GOD HATH SPOKEN! Do we realize the importance and magnitude of these words? Perhaps we are so accustomed to handling the Word of God—the *Word of God*—that we grow careless in our thoughts concerning it. It is like many things in our lives which, because of familiarity, we incline to take for granted.

We speak to one another day by day. We speak to one another by way of exhortation and encouragement — and we feel the warmth and nearness of personal association.

We must—in the things of the Spirit—come to feel this same personal affinity and relationship to our Heavenly Father. We must realize that He is everywhere present and, as our Father, is ever near to watch, guide and protect our steps.

This frame of mind—of ever-present divine communion and envelopment—can only be arrived at by a constant application to the words God has spoken. We can only make the Creator personal to our thoughts and actions by hearing His words. And this is the *family feeling* He wants us to possess:

"Beloved, NOW are we the Sons of God!" (1 John 3:2).

This adds deeper meaning to the words of Christ—

"Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:4).

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.”

"EXTREME"

Moses, Samuel, and David are types of the sort of men God is pleased with. They would be considered "extreme," AND SO THEY WERE—but rightly so. We may be content to be reckoned in their company.—Bro. Roberts, 1885.

The Prince-Priest of the Age to Come

By brother Robert Roberts

PART TWENTY-SIX

OBJECTION 32: The expression (used at the commencement of the Temple vision), "The hand of the Lord was upon me," is one that Ezekiel uses when about to describe something SYMBOLIC. Therefore the Temple vision is not literal.

This is by no means a necessary conclusion. It is true that Ezekiel uses this expression more than once when about to describe something symbolic (as 1:3 & 3:22), but the use of the phrase cannot be to intimate the particular character of the thing about to be described, because it is *also used in connection with communications of a literal character*, as when "the hand of the Lord was upon" him to apprise him of the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (33:22), or to convey him to the captives settled at Telabib (3:14).

It would not be a natural form of speech to use for intimating a symbolic meaning about to follow. It has reference rather to the *special force employed to open the faculties of the prophet* on the occasions where it is used.

There were "divers manners" in the mode of these messages by the prophets, as Paul informs us (Heb. 1:1). In the case of Moses, it was face to face, without figure (Num. 12:8). In the case of ordinary prophets, it was by dream or other subjective operation of the Spirit (Num. 12:6).

In most cases, "The Word of the Lord came" to the prophet as a matter of *verbal recital* which he was to repeat (Num. 23:3; 2 Sam. 7:4). But in special cases, the prophet was caused to see things which he was commanded to describe.

This was a higher form of communication than by mere message; and required a more intense degree of divine energy to be put forth, as in the cases both of Ezekiel and John, of whom it is stated that the Spirit "took them up," "carried them away," "entered into them," causing them to be "in spirit," or otherwise, with "the hand of the Lord laid upon them" (Eze. 3:12, 2:2, 3:14; Rev. 4:2; 17:3; 21:10).

The prophets' faculties were in these cases fully opened not only to receive messages addressed to them, but to see things shown to them for inspection and delineation. But as to whether the things seen were literal or symbolic, that was altogether a question of the things themselves and not of the mode employed to show them.

When John saw the saints in joyful and immortal assembly, he saw a literal thing; when he saw a two-horned beast of the earth enslaving the nations of Europe, he saw a mixed exhibition—partly literal, partly symbolic; when he saw a woman-ridden monster in an ocean of waters, he saw a pure symbol.

But in all cases, the means of sight was the same. It was the intense action of the Spirit—"the hand of God upon them." But it is not the means of sight, but the *thing seen* that determines the character of the thing.

When Ezekiel saw the cherubim and wheels within wheels, he saw a symbolic presentment of the divine glory; but when he saw a land to be divided among tribes; a Holy portion thereof in the center; a Temple like the frame of a city in the middle of the Holy portion; a Prince acting as Head and Leader thereof, with an immense estate east and west thereof, in his exclusive possession; and an immense body of priests in two orders having charge under him of the entire service—he certainly saw what was literal, both by the nature of the things seen and by the applications thereof by God's own message to the prophet, as in Ezek. 43:7-11; 44:9-14.

OBJECTION 33: In ch. 44 we find the Levites are not to come near the holy things; yet in v. 30 we find that "The first or chief of every devoted thing shall be theirs." Is this in harmony with their degradation?

The explanation is to be found in the difference between—

". . . coming near to any of My holy things in the Most Holy (v. 13).

—and daily sustenance by the eating of—

". . . every dedicated thing and first of all the first fruits (v. 29).

The Levites shall not do the former, which is reserved for the sons of Zadok; but they shall do the latter, which is the means of living for inferior order of priests, degraded because of ancestral apostasy.

Worshippers bringing offerings of any kind—either firstfruits or what they have voluntarily dedicated—hand them over to the priests at the gates where the second order are to minister (45:11). By these, they are used for sustenance, for they have no possession in the land. But the—

". . . My holy things in the Most Holy"

—are for the service of the *sons of Zadok alone* (vs. 15-16).

OBJECTION 34: How can we accept the idea that there will be sacrifices in the Age to Come in the face of the fact that God has declared that He had "no pleasure in them" under the first Covenant, and has put them aside as mere shadows?

This objection is met by asking *why* God had no pleasure in the institutions of His own appointment? He Himself tells us: — *Because they were offered with a wicked and mercenary mind* (Isa. 1:23, 11; Amos 5:11-22; Mai. 1:10). In the age to come it will be different:

"Thy people also shall be all righteous" (Isa. 60:21).

Then, we are told by Malachi,

". . . shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord as in the days of old, and as in former years" (Mal. 3:4).

If the sacrifices were put aside as mere shadows, it was because they were no longer needed when the nation was broken up, and when the antitypical sacrifice was to be preached to the Gentiles as the meeting point of an individual worship. When the nation is restored, it is natural there should be a restoration of the national ritual (Deut. 30:8); and being restored, the question is, *With what meaning?*

The objector says the idea of sacrifices in the age to come being *memorial* is pure assumption. Not so. It is no assumption that the sacrifices *are* to be offered. It is no assumption that Christ—

"By one sacrifice hath perfected forever them who are sanctified."

Consequently either the sacrifices will have *no meaning* or they must be *memorials* of the one great Sacrifice of which they were once typical. Will the objector say they have no meaning? No; he is inclined to say there will be no sacrifices. Here he contradicts the testimony, and therefore he must be wrong.

He suggests that the fact that the sacrifices of the Ezekiel vision are "*offered for sin*," shows they cannot be memorial, because memorials are not for obtaining the remission of sins, but for recalling to mind remission obtained.

The answer is that the memorial part relates to Christ as the sin-bearer, and not to the receiving of the individual benefit from his sacrifice, which is a question of compliance with the conditions presented. These conditions vary with the times and seasons.

Individual benefit for the sinners that will live in the kingdom has yet to be achieved; for they are not yet born. Now if the law of this individual benefit in that age require the offering of sacrifices recalling Christ, then the offering of those sacrifices would be for the remission of sin, though only memorial; just as under the Law of Moses, the "blood of bulls and of goats," though typical, secured forgiveness for the worshipper, on account of the provision that was coming after (Lev. 4:20; 5:16; Heb. 9:15).

Our friend mistakes the placing together and reconciling of all parts of the testimony for "assumption." If this process "sounds like the special pleading of an able barrister," it is because of the task God has imposed on our faculties for our benefit in the form He has been pleased to impart to Word of the Truth, requiring "right division," and not because there is anything inherently fallacious in the process.

As for circumcision, it will be the absolute and universal rule of acceptance under the New Covenant (Eze. 44:9). *We come under the rule through Christ; whose circumcision we share in the connection we make with him in baptism* (Col. 2:11).

(TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH, IF THE LORD WILL)

CONFERENCES

We have no "conferences." Their influence is evil in the absence of divine authority and wisdom to enlighten and keep things straight. We protest against them as incipient tyrannies. Let every church manage its own affairs. Let its members exert themselves in their own spheres for the diffusion of the truth. —Bro. Thomas, 1861.

Fraternal Gatherings are beneficial when restricted to purely spiritual objects (that is, let the brethren assemble anywhere from anywhere, and exhort, or worship, or have social intercourse together); but they become SOURCES OF EVIL if allowed to acquire a legislative character IN THE LEAST DEGREE. —Bro. Roberts, Ecclesial Guide.

One Man Against an Empire

"Mordecai sat in the king's gate"—Esther 2:19.

His position appears to be one of service to the court of the king in some manner. He was associated with the palace and the activities which would grow up around the throne of a monarch whose empire stretched from India to Ethiopia. These events of which we are reading place Mordecai in the position of the righteous of all ages, as a representative of those who do the bidding of the King in the heavens, *waiting always at His gates*, where judgment and justice are dispersed. David expressed it thus (Psa. 122:1-2)—

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go to the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem."

It seems to speak of the way of salvation and the relationship of the saints to Jesus as the door:

"I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture" (John 10:9).

We find that while Mordecai was engaged in service to the king he was aware of the activities of those who would destroy the monarch. He reported the matter to Esther who in turn relayed the information to the king, and the evil men were brought to justice. In line with all the activities of the empire (2:23)—

"It was written in the book of the chronicles before the king."

But Mordecai's King was greater than this monarch. It was He Who setteth up and removeth kings according to the working of His purpose. Mordecai was now living in exile because the kings and rulers of his nation had not honored their King, even God. Yet this faithful man still trusted in the God of his fathers, Whose voice had declared that the Jews were God's witnesses. He still felt confidence in God even in the darkness of Gentile domination.

In all ages there have been the few faithful who have waited upon the Lord, have been found in the gates of His palace, doing His bidding. Their deeds have not gone unnoticed, but they have been recorded as we are expressly informed:

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it. And a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His Name" (Mal. 3:16).

We are also instructed that there is a Book of Life recorded concerning all deeds which are done, and that we shall be judged according to what is found written therein. We have the assurance that it will be right and just judgment. It is the part of faith and patience to wait for the disposition of the King.

In the meanwhile we endure the darkness and trial of the probationary sojourn. We continue in service, though the darkness seems to increase, and many times almost obscuring our way. But through all the voice of God calls, "*This is the way, walk ye in it.*"

God continually speaks to us, while we draw near to Him and His Word. It was in this same confidence that Mordecai rested his hopes of a better day for his people.

"Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them . . .
Ye shall serve the Lord your God" (Ex. 23:24-25).

With the advancement of Haman to kingly favor in the realm of Persia, there also went a command that all officers of lower rank should bow and do him reverence. This, in the estimation of a righteous man, was a violation of divine command. Mordecai now stood in Daniel's place in opposition to the powers of Persia. His obedience to divine command was the cause of an evil plan which was to ultimate in the utter extermination of his race.

Was it not presumption on the part of one man to stand out against the power of a universal empire? Had not God brought about this evil because of Israel's sin? Had He not prophesied and ordained the rise of Persia as the second world kingdom? *What could ONE MAN do in such circumstances?*

But Mordecai steadfastly refused to bow the knee to worship any other than the God of heaven. It was the time of Jacob's trouble. Yet he knew that God was behind it all, Who had said—

"Yet will I not make a full end of thee" (Jer. 30:11).

And his faith was the faith of Job (13:15)—

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

And to manifest his sorrow and shame for all that had now been brought upon his race because of God's judgments against them, he went in sackcloth and ashes, and manifested by mourning the righteousness of the Divine hand upon them.

This is the position of all the saints in the ages of calling out from the world. Their stand of separation from the world and its pride and pleasure place them—as we are shown in Revelation — "under the altar," or "enduring the rod of affliction." We can hear Mordecai uttering the words of Psa. 69:11-13:

"I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them. They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards. But as for me, my prayer is unto Thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of Thy mercy hear me, in the truth of Thy salvation."

Realizing that God's Word was unchangeable, Mordecai reasoned that the elevation of Esther to high rank in the empire was divinely arranged. Was it not evident that she did not use artifice to accomplish that end? *She required nothing of special outward adorning when presented to the king.* She possessed those inward qualities of grace imparted by an attendance to Word of God through the guidance of a righteous man.

"If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Est. 4:14).

While others were wringing their hands in despair, Mordecai had apparently *diligently considered the Word of God.* Esther, having been brought up in the fear of the Lord, realized the greatness of the danger to her people, and that action was required of her. She stood with Daniel and declared her resolution:

"IF I PERISH, I PERISH."

The experiences of these faithful two were confined to a strange land, where they were a subject nation; where their activities would be somewhat restricted. The glories of their nation's past they only knew by the divine Word, recorded by God's prophets.

Yet their very condition of wandering in a foreign land was evidence of the truth of what God had said from the time of Moses. This touches the basic point of the faith of Abraham,

"He that cometh unto God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).

We must have this as a foundation upon which to build. We must be sure within ourselves that God has the power to do all things for us, *and will do so*—if we let Him. He may not do it in the manner in which we would naturally expect. That is where faith comes in; that we accept with confidence the measure of trial which His wisdom dictates, knowing that the end of a trial of faith is joy and peace, in the true servant.

"There is one law to put him to death" (Est. 4:11).

This Persian law states the position of all people in the sight of God. Their position of alienation because of sin makes them all worthy of death. And it is only by the manifestation of the divine mercy extended to those who have found favor in His eyes that we have any hope of life and forgiveness. Then and then only shall we be free to *stand safely within the inner court*, having been called, and presented the golden sceptre. There will be no presumption on the part of those who have striven faithfully. It will be always a petition to God Most High (Est. 7:3):

"Let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request."

* * *

"What shall be done to the man the king delighteth to honor?"

The chronicles are read, the deed of Mordecai comes up in remembrance before the king, and *in the morning* he is to be honored by association with the kingly splendor and prerogatives. His name is to be declared far and wide that all may know the reward in store for those unto whom the king will do justice. *And it was to be by the hand of those who formerly would have destroyed him that Mordecai was to be proclaimed.*

"The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at thy feet" (Isa. 60:14).

The voice of God was still to be heard. He had not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Nor shall the hand that afflicts them prosper in the finality. This has become a well-known fact, though little heeded.

"If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him."

So it is with all the wicked. God will return their iniquity upon their own head. That which thou soweth thou shalt also reap. Haman was hanged upon his own gallows.

But what of ourselves? In the meanwhile we must place ourselves at God's disposal. The circumstances of our lives work out in very natural ways. Thus we may feel that the Creator has no use with our service. But if we are assured in our minds that we have been called out by God, certainly we must concede that God had a reason in calling us. There is wisdom in all that God does. *We ourselves are the only ones who can stand in the way of God using us in the way He desires.*

"He raiseth up the poor out of the dust . . . that He may set him with the princes of His people" (Psa. 113:4-8).

Certainly this is what happened in Persia. God brought about that which He intended. *He caused the eyes of a whole nation to turn toward Him.* The incident magnified the purposes and will of God far above the devices of man.

It illustrated another eternal truth, that he who toucheth the Jew toucheth the apple of God's eye, and will not go unpunished. Thus we find Mordecai standing in the place of Haman the enemy of the Jews. We find him *"possessing the gate of his enemies."* He stands next to the king of a universal empire, a counsellor to the highest power on earth.

Do not the events of these chapters from Esther impress us with the picture of the calling and choosing of God from generation to generation? Are we not shown the disposition of circumstances by an Almighty hand *all unknown to mortal nations*, laying the foundation for coming events? Are we not taught thereby that *"all things are for the sake of God's elect?"*

The events of Israel after the days of the Babylonian captivity are a miniature of the whole plan of salvation for the righteous. First the trial of faith, the testing to make manifest if they really believe what God has said, the arranging of circumstances which will best illustrate the particular degree of faith which He requires.

Then when there appears no avenue of deliverance God reveals that His divine hand has been nearby through all the trial. Then comes the fulfilment, *"God IS a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."* Elevation to a position next to the king and the blessing of all nations in the glorious liberty which is brought about. How full of meaning is the closing expression of this book!—

"For Mordecai the Jew was next unto the king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed" (Est. 10:3).

What a beautiful type of the king who is yet to come with his glorified saints, executing justice in the Age of Peace!
—F.H.

Perfect Peace

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee"—Is. 26.3.

This declaration of the Spirit introduces us to a subject of great depth and beauty—and one also of great and abiding importance. We do well to meditate upon it—to consider it word by word.

"*Thou*"—God is the beginning and foundation. God is also the ending and completion. This divine charter of eternal peace is encompassed by God: ". . . whose mind is stayed on *Thee*."

"*Thou wilt*." Here is purpose and assurance. No yea and nay. No perhaps, or possibly, or usually—but a sure and all-powerful guarantee: "*Thou WILT*."

"*Keep*." Permanence and stability. What value is this peace, if it will not endure? But here we are dealing with One who wearies or changes not. "*Thou wilt KEEP*."

"*Thou wilt keep him*." Who? Everyone? All who ask? No. Only a certain class. Only those who follow a certain, prescribed course. Only the ones described in the latter part of this promise.

In natural things, intelligent men do not take the road south, and expect to reach the north, or the downhill road and expect to reach the top. Rather are they very careful as to their methods and directions. But in spiritual things—the only things of any real importance—*wishing and assuming* so often take the place of *planning and doing*.

The Scriptures say: "As a man sows, so shall he reap." It is as simple as that. This is not recorded for us in bitterness or anger, but it is a plain statement of fact. In natural things, men accept this fact. They do not sow one crop, and expect to reap another; or sow nothing at all, and expect to reap as if they had sown.

If we give our lives and time and energy to natural, passing things, we shall reap natural, passing things—very nice and gratifying natural things, if we work hard in that direction.

If we give our lives and time and energy to spiritual, eternal things, we shall reap spiritual, eternal things (and our crop of natural things will be poor, but what matters that?).

The choice is ours. We each have our life. We can invest it exactly as we choose. But let us be sure that we have thought it well out, that we know just which we are doing, and that we will be *satisfied in the end with the results*.

Christ will not wave a magic wand at the judgment-seat, changing wishes and intentions into facts. He will be *judging sober judgment*—according as every man's works shall be found to be.

What is the next word? "*In*." Just a little, unimportant one that we might pass over, but perhaps worth a thought. "*Thou wilt keep him IN*"—inside, encircled, protected, overshadowed.

Perhaps just at present it does not appeal to us to be kept *in*. Perhaps, especially if we are young, there are many enticing-looking things *outside*. But here is where "wisdom is profitable to

direct." Here is where we are exhorted to consider the end, and not be "as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding"—aware only of the present.

In the final picture, *in* will be very desirable, and *out* will be very empty and bleak. Some will say, "Lord, open to us and let us *in*." But there will be no entering then. "*Thou wilt keep him in*."

The next word is "*perfect*." This is the key word, and sets the tone for the whole promise, giving it meaning and value. The whole theme of the Scriptures is perfection. How does Jesus sum up the marvellous, heavenly teachings in his message in Matt. 5?—

"BE YE PERFECT."

—and lest there be any quibble about what he meant, he added—

". . . even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Jesus prayed that his disciples might be "made perfect" (John 17:23). Paul, Peter and James gave expression to the same earnest prayer for those in their care (Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 5:10; Jam. 1:4). To the Ephesians (4:13) Paul declared that we should—

". . . be no longer children, but ALL come in the unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a PERFECT man, unto the measure of the stature of the **fulness of Christ**."

Epaphras labored fervently in prayers that his brethren might "stand *PERFECT* in *ALL* the will of God" (Col. 4:12). Paul reminded Timothy that the very purpose for which the Scriptures were given was that—through diligent and unceasing application to doctrine, correction, reproof and instruction—

". . . the man of God might be PERFECT, and **thoroughly** furnished unto ALL good works" (2 Tim. 3:17).

With this marvellous instruction of the Spirit (so glorious in its import that it is blinding and fearful to the natural, fleshly mind) correspond the many beautiful and inspiring visions we are given of the True Bride, "adorned for her husband" with the true *inward* spiritual adorning.

"Christ loved the Ecclesia, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of (the living) water by the Word . . .

"That he might present it to himself a glorious Ecclesia, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish . . . this is a great mystery."

Truly it is indeed a "great mystery," hidden from the "wise and prudent" who are quite sure in their "wisdom" that it is an impossible fantasy, but revealed in divine mercy unto a few "babes."

Dare we say to God that all these promises of the Spirit are meaningless exaggerations? That we have no right to foolishly expect these conditions in the holy, sanctified, called-out Body of Christ, in which God dwells by His Spirit? That we must be practical and reasonable, and abandon these impossible ideals, and come down to earth? That we must resign ourselves to a common, natural, earthly mediocrity in the holy Body of Christ—and be thankful it isn't any worse?

That is the counsel of defeat and despair. That is what we are asked to give in to and accept—after years of striving and struggling toward the "more excellent way." One thing is certain—a body, or an individual, will *NEVER* attain any higher than it aims. *And the scriptural standard and goal is PERFECTION.*

That was what God intended, and for which He made complete provision—both in Israel and in the Ecclesia of Christ. There are no greater lessons in Scripture than those of Achan and of Ananias and Sapphira—parallel cases in a strange and significant way. How clearly they reveal the mind, and purpose, and desire of God!

Have we not so often pondered on the fact that one small offence in all Israel completely disrupted the working of God in and through them, and they could not go on until that offence was tracked down and rooted out?

In His loving arrangements for Israel, God made provision for a maintenance of perfection—a constant renewing, and cleansing, and purging out of the slightest thing that offended—so that He could dwell closely and intimately among them. What a wonderful, "holy nation" in the earth Israel could have been, if they had maintained this intended relationship with God! But as Israel drifted from God, God ceased to cleanse and purify them by rooting out the offences. The glory gradually moved farther away.

So with the newborn Ecclesia of Christ. God gives the divinely intended pattern in the stirring record in the beginning of Acts:

“And they continued stedfast in doctrine and fellowship and prayer . . . and all that believed were together and had all things common . . . with gladness and singleness of heart . . . praising God and having favor with all. . . . and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit . . . and the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one mind, neither said any of them that ought of the things he possessed was his own . . . great grace was upon them all.”

What a beautiful, "impossible" picture!—impossible and impractical in the view of the seared and blunted "wisdom" of the mind of the flesh.

And because of this faithful, zealous condition, God—in His mercy and care—cut off from among them the defilement of Ananias and Sapphira, jealously cleansing and protecting His infant Ecclesia, just as He had the new-born Israel.

But—as with Israel—the glory of the heavenly vision soon fades, and the flesh, in its self-satisfied Laodiceanism, presumes to define what is, and what is not, "possible" to the power of the Spirit; and what were once inspiring and transforming divine assurances are interpreted as tantalising and unattainable will-o-the-wisps.

"Thou will keep him in perfect PEACE." This word "peace" is the central word of the sentence—it is the seventh word from each end. It is the keystone of this beautiful arch of divine promise which springs from, and eventuates in, God. What is peace? The dictionary defines it as:

"A mental or spiritual state in which there is freedom from that which is disquieting or perturbing—fears, agitating passions, moral conflicts."

Peace is *freedom*. Jesus said to the Jews:

"The Truth shall make you FREE" (John 8:32).

They were quite unimpressed, and replied, "We *are* free already, we have no need of your freedom." And to the majority it was just meaningless words when he told them:

"Whosoever committeth sin is the SLAVE of sin."

Men talk much about freedom. They take great pride in the delusion that they are "free." But all except the rare few who have the Spirit's peace are helpless slaves of the great master Sin.

Sin tells them to be proud, selfish, ambitious, to seek their own, to labor for and be concerned about worldly things, to gratify their natural desires which lead them finally into the cold arms of Sin's inseparable partner, Death.

Peace is freedom. But true peace is not just a negative thing. It is not just the absence of fears, passions and conflicts. True, scriptural peace is a living, positive force.

Peace, without God in the center of it, would be quite a monotonous vacuum. It is easy to understand natural man's lack of desire for it. But the rest of the promise takes care of that—"*Whose mind is stayed on Thee.*"

The mind is the thoughts, intellect, awareness, consciousness, hopes, desires, purposes, yearnings and aspirations. These must have a center and an object of interest and affection. They must have a fruitful field of activity and exercise.

There are two, separate, distinct spheres in which they can operate—the agitating passions, or the peace of God. We must consider them well, and choose between them.

"*Whose mind is stayed.*" To be stayed is to be upheld, supported, sustained, established—unwavering, unmovable. David says:

"Great peace have they who love Thy Law, and nothing shall offend them" (Psa. 119:165).

"Nothing" here is related to the "perfection" of the peace. It is valueless if it does not hold true every time, without fail.

"Which *love Thy Law.*" Some seem to feel that love and law are incompatible—that they are two opposites—that we must override law in order to manifest "love." In a sense it *is* true that love and law are incompatible, for as soon as we wholeheartedly and enthusiastically *love* the Law, it ceases—for us—to be law, and becomes rather an eagerly-sought opportunity to demonstrate our love. Jesus says (John 14:15)—

"If ye love me, keep my commandments."

But as he speaks, the thought changes. He says a little later:

"If a man love me, he WILL keep my words."

This time he does not say "commandment"—he does not need to. If a man love him, they are no longer commandments, but happily-fulfilled wishes of a loved one. David exclaimed—

"O how I love Thy Law! It is my meditation ALL the day!"

We can put this "all" in the same category with the "perfect" and the "nothing." It is a word of completeness—a word of glorious *extremeness*. Some seem to labor under the notion that to be an "extremist" is something to be ashamed of—an epithet with which to belabor and discredit others.

For the mind to be stayed on God is to love the Law of God, and to meditate upon it ALL the day—for the Law of God is the revelation of the mind and character of God. It teaches us what He is, and what He takes pleasure in. It both reveals Him to us and draws us to Him—transforming us to His pattern of perfection.

Writing to the Philippians, Paul speaks of the "*peace of God which passeth all understanding.*" And he tells us how to go about achieving it. First he says (Phil. 4:4)—

"Rejoice in the Lord **always**; and again I say, Rejoice!"

This is very important. See how he puts it first, and how he repeats it for emphasis. And note the "always." Not just when we naturally feel like rejoicing it—it means nothing then—but *always*, as a regular, established, purposeful course of life. (This "always" is related to the "perfect," the "nothing," and the "all" that we have noted earlier.)

Can we rejoice in the Lord always?—when we are sick, or in trouble, or worried, or cast down, or discouraged, or under pressure of various kinds? These are the very times when it is most important to rejoice.

To rejoice in the Lord *always* is the first stepping-stone to the "peace of God which passeth all understanding." Nothing is ever so bad that a consideration of the overall eternal picture will not give grounds for rejoicing.

In fact, the worse things are, the more they intensify the basis of true rejoicing. Rejoice *in the Lord*; rejoice that the present is brief and passing, and all its evil is working to a wise, eternal end.

Rejoice, as Paul says (Rom. 5:3)—rejoice, glory, triumph *in tribulation*. Not just rejoice *during* tribulation—the meaning is deeper than that. But rejoice *because* of tribulation,

". . . knowing that tribulation worketh stedfastness . . . because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts."

Surely if tribulation provide the avenue for God to pour love into our hearts, then tribulation gives abundant grounds for rejoicing! How strange and marvellous are the ways of God! How little we know about eternal realities!

How long was the power of the atom hidden within apparently "dead" matter! What infinitely vaster powers and purposes exist in spiritual realms of which natural man has never dreamed!

Next Paul says (v. 5)—

"Let your moderation be known unto all men."

What is "moderation"? The word doesn't carry very much of a clear idea, nor does it at all express the true meaning here, as can be very easily determined. The Rev. Vers. has instead "forbearance," and in the margin "gentleness."

Now we begin to get a clearer picture. Other versions have "forbearing spirit." This word is always translated elsewhere throughout the Auth. Vers. as "patience" or "gentleness." It occurs as "gentleness," for example, in Paul's entreaty (2 Cor. 10:1)—

"I beseech you, by the meekness and **gentleness** of Christ."

Gentleness of character is an essential ingredient of peace of mind. We are apt to think of patience and gentleness as virtues practised for the sake of others, but actually they have an even greater and more basic value to ourselves.

They are part of the invincible armament of internal peace. They make and keep peace within ourselves even more effectively than they contribute to peace with others. We cannot have peace unless we develop gentleness and patience.

"Let your patience and gentleness be known to *ALL* men." Here again a word of completeness and perfection—one of those *extreme* words which frighten the half-hearted. Unless these attributes are applied consistently and indiscriminately to *all*, and in *all* circumstances, they are not the real thing, and they will never produce peace. They are then just cheap subterfuges for personal advantage and self-satisfaction.

If we are building for *perfect* peace, our building materials must be solid and true, and not just surface veneer for outward appearance.

Why are patience and gentleness essential for peace? The answer is obvious immediately if we consider what the absence of these characteristics mean—*impatience and irritation*. Clearly no peace could blossom in that soil.

If we examine every cause of impatience or irritation, one or both of two things will be found at the bottom of it—having our *pride hurt*, or having our *desires frustrated*. If our pride and desires are related to the esteem of men, and to earthly things that men can jeopardize or in any way effect, *we shall never have peace*.

But if our glorying and desires relate wholly to eternal things that men cannot touch, our peace can never be disturbed. The peace of the godly man is secure, for it rests in things beyond the reach of mortal hands.

Jesus said: "*Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly, and ye shall rest (peace) unto your souls.*"

Meekness and lowliness lead to peace. Pride is the great enemy of peace. Pride is such a nuisance—

- such an evil thing; such a potent cause of misery;
- such a merciless driver and miserly rewarder;
- such a robber of time and energy;
- such a magnet for hate and envy—

—that it is a wonder any sane person harbors it. Yet it is deeply engrained in all of us, one of the most vicious and tenacious roots of the law of sin in our members. Pride is natural man's most cherished possession, and one of the world's great virtues. Most people will do anything, and spite themselves in every other way, in order to protect their pride.

How much of man's labor is just to cater to his self-satisfaction and pride!—a better job, a better home, a better car, a better neighborhood, the desire to be looked up to as important—the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. Is that the mind of Jesus Christ, or of Paul, or of John the Baptist?

We must make our choice between peace and pride. We cannot have both, for one is spiritual, and the other is carnal.

The worst thing about pride is that it is such a universal and deceptive parasite. It can fasten its roots into anything, and flourish. There is no pride more robust and assertive than the pride of a man who is proud of his humility.

What is the third step Paul prescribes for peace? Verse 6—

"Be careful for nothing."

Does he mean just to let things drift without any effort or concern for them? Hardly, for he says elsewhere we must always "abound in the work of the Lord," beside laboring for our own necessities and others.

What he is combating is *worry*, for there can be no peace where there is worry. The most effective cure for worry is to force ourselves to the humbling but comforting realization that we are but an insignificant partner in a great and invincible partnership.

God is the major partner. The big problems and their solution are safely in His hands. We but need to calmly do our little part as it presents itself from day to day. That is what Paul is telling us here; turn the problems over to God, and get on with *your* part:

"Be careful for nothing, but in EVERYTHING, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving make your requests to God."

"In *everything*"—note again that word of completeness. Insurance is of little value if it does not cover every possible emergency. If it doesn't, it is not *insurance* at all, but just a gamble with odds. And there is only one insurance that covers every eventuality.

Peter says the same, with the same emphasis on completeness—

"Humble yourself . . . cast ALL your care upon Him." (1:5:6-7).

"All your cares"—no exceptions. God's insurance has no small print, full of reservations. We note Paul says—

"In everything **with thanksgiving** make your requests to God."

Every approach to God must be with thanksgiving. That is the essential incense that *must* accompany every acceptable sacrifice. And surely that is most reasonable! If we are so spiritually numb that we are not consciously and constantly thankful for the priceless blessings already so freely received—of being called out of death and darkness to the life and light of sonship of God—why should God give us any more?

Present problems and troubles must never be allowed to obscure this basic, overflowing thankfulness which is one of the essential ingredients of the perfect peace we are seeking.

After having outlined the way—

Rejoice **always** in the Lord;

Let your gentleness, your patience, your forbearing spirit, be consistently manifested toward **all** men;

Worry about **nothing**, turn **all** cares over to God;

In **everything** seek God's help in constant thanksgiving—

—then the apostle gives the glorious assurance of success—

"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, SHALL keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ."

Is this another of those impossible ideals—those tantalizing unattainables? We cannot bring ourselves to side with those who morbidly think so.

As he bid farewell to his disciples, and prepared himself for his great and terrible ordeal, Jesus calmly said—

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you. Not as the world gives give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Surely nothing could be truer than that it is not as the world gives that Jesus gives peace. What a shabby makeshift is the best the world has to offer!—especially as we look at it today with its vain cries of "Peace, peace!" when there is no peace. And there cannot be peace, for the Spirit through Isaiah declares (32:17)—

"The work of **righteousness** shall be peace, and the effect of **righteousness** quietness and assurance forever."

"*Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*" Is that sometimes hard to do? A little later, right at the end of his farewell, Jesus tells his little band how—

"Ask, and ye SHALL receive, that your joy may be FULL . . ."

("Full" is another of those wonderful words of perfection and completeness. There are no half-measures with the Spirit of God).

". . . These things have I spoken unto you that **in me** ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation . . . but be of good cheer—I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD."

Peace is the end of warfare, and the fruit of victory. He had overcome the world—the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life—and he had peace.

And he invites us to share with him his perfect, eternal peace— by leaving all, and following him. —G.V.G.

The Lamentations of Jeremiah

PART FIVE

"The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold—how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!"—Lam. 4: 2

The age of faith in God had passed. That spiritual frame of mind illustrated by David, who was precious in God's sight, who was termed a man after God's own heart, had given place to flesh glorification.

Man, as naturally constituted, is considered but an earthen pitcher, or container. His acceptability to God as a container is only measured *by what he puts in*. If he has but earthly sensual thoughts, he simply remains an earthen vessel. He has added no other characteristics to distinguish him from his original elements.

"Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19).

But if he fill himself with the Divine attributes of mercy, kindness and longsuffering, gentleness and meekness, having responded with wholehearted obedience to God's requirements, he takes on a reflection of his Creator, Who is the potter.

"God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ . . .

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Cor. 4:6-7).

If we permit the Divine impressions to be molded into our characters we become vessels meet for the Master's use. We become *precious sons of Zion*, comparable unto fine gold. But if there is no response to the hand of the Potter, if we are brittle and not pliable, if we become marred in the forming, we remain vessels of wrath, fit only for destruction.

The prophet Jeremiah now was witnessing the fulfilment of his earlier words to Judah in chapters 18 and 19. In ch. 18 the prophet is instructed to go to the potter's house and observe the potter at his work. The lesson was that God was the Potter and would direct the circumstances of men and nations according to their attitude toward Him. If they repented of evil ways, God would turn from His wrath and bless them. So also if a people had been promised blessings at the Creator's hands, and they turned away to wickedness, God would withdraw His blessings.

The enacted parable was lost on Judah for they replied to the prophet's words of exhortation to repentance,

"We will walk after our own devices, and we will everyone do the imagination of his evil heart" (Jer. 18:12).

Ch. 19 carries the parable to its climax as Jeremiah takes an earthen bottle to the refuse dump of the city of Jerusalem, even to the valley of Hinnom, in the presence of the elders of his people. There he expostulates with them of all their wickedness in worshipping strange gods, and sacrificing their sons to Baal, and causing them to pass through fire in offerings to these heathen abominations. Then he broke the earthen bottle, saying,

"Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel" (Jer. 19:11).

Thus the prophet contemplating the ruins in later years would call to mind the parable.

"How are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!" (Lam. 4:2).

* * *

"The daughter of my people is become cruel" (Lam 4: 3).

The prophet now draws our attention to a characteristic which was evident amongst the greater part of the population of Jerusalem in his time. It is only necessary to make a comparison or two to observe the reasons for this degeneracy in God's people. First let us consider God's attributes as proclaimed by Himself—

"The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and in truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Exo. 34:6-7).

These loving characteristics were manifested throughout God's dealings with His people. They were exhibited, not only for Israel to honor and reverence their Heavenly Father, but also for the people to *develop in themselves* and to manifest in their actions one with another and to all people.

The spiritual aspects of their Law were designed to promote these very things. They were commanded to instruct their children in the fear of the Lord, and to feed them with spiritual food, that they also should know the *real meaning* behind God's commandments. Did not Christ say (Matt. 22:37) that the whole Law was enwrapped in the first two commands?—

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, all thy soul, and all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two hang all the Law and the Prophets."

The constant repetition of seedtime and harvest with their loaded blessings were to impress upon their minds God's ever-present goodness and love, teaching that He is a Rewarder of them that seek Him *with their whole heart and mind*. God epitomized these blessings through Moses in Deut. 28:1-14, making them contingent upon their observance of His commandments.

All of God's actions are done in love and kindness and mercy. It is on this basis that He has framed the present principle of salvation from death (John 3:16)—

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

But what of Baal and Molech and the base and sensual worship connected with those idolatries? They completely destroyed the finer characteristics which God's law sought to develop. Parental affection was submerged in the hard principle of passing their children through fire to those pagan demons.

Such a cult produced cold individuals, indifferent to the instincts of love and affection, and careless to the life of their offspring, both from the natural aspect as well as the spiritual. Paul told Timothy that such a class would again appear in the last days. He used language which would well apply to degenerate Israel:

"Men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:2-4).

It is not surprising then that with such idolatry competing with the worship of God, Jeremiah should say that the *natural brute beasts put Israel to shame*:

"Even the sea-monsters give suck to their young" (Lam. 4:3).

—while the children of this faithless generation wandered for the precious fruits of the earth, and their cry unheeded.

Elijah had illustrated that the God of heaven was the Provider of rain in due season, to cause the fruitful earth to yield its increase. But Israel's sister Judah espoused the worship of Baal through association and fellowship and became baser in her idolatrous affections.

God is not mocked. He gave them over to the results of their pagan adorations. In the siege and straitness their idols could not save them, nor provide for their hunger. Yet it was in the power of God to provide overnight if they had trusted in Him. Do we not recall the miraculous supply of food when Samaria was besieged by the Syrians (2 Kgs. 7)? The taunting of Sennacherib before the city walls in Hezekiah's day now was driven home:

"Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their countries out of mine hand?" (2 Kings 18:35).

Now that Judah trusted in Baal and Molech they had no more protection than all the other countries.

The pride of the upper classes—primarily responsible for the calamities upon God's people—is brought even to the dust. The haughty ones are brought low and the princes themselves realize the

pangs of hunger, while the siege brings out the worst in them as they seek to assuage their appetites (v. 10). It was a merciful sword that destroyed them. Hunger was worse than death (v. 9).

The very circumstances of their city only served to aggravate their plight. The city was an impregnable fortress; looked upon by all nations as a natural fortification, impossible of capture. Therefore the length of the siege and the lack of supply caused the famine and pestilence—the irresistible swords of God—to stalk from palace to humble cottage.

"*Serve the king of Babylon and live,*" cried Jeremiah. But they put him in prison as a traitor, and chose to die by famine. Approximately 18 months the city was besieged. God had kindled the fire which would eat to its very foundations (v. 11).

"Though the kings of the earth would not have believed that the adversary should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem."

—yet God opened a way and accomplished His fury in wrath upon them. In the days of Hezekiah faith in God saved the city. Now there was no redeeming virtue; just a righteous handful whose lives were spared by escape and deliverance. It speaks of another day when Lot and his two daughters were all that finally escaped the judgments upon Sodom.

In the case of Sodom and Gomorrah the destruction of those cities was swift and summary. The final pangs of Jerusalem were intense and long drawn out. Their responsibility was far greater by reason of knowledge and instruction. Therefore,

"The punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her."

We are impressed with the lesson of *responsibility*. God had told Israel through Amos the prophet (3:2)—

"You only have I known of all the families of the earth: **therefore** I will punish you for all your iniquities."

This same principle pervades all the teaching of the Scriptures. The lesson of Israel's failure is set forth as an example for us to consider. Let us understand the magnitude of the love and mercy extended to us by God, in calling us to the knowledge of His eternal purpose. Let us not despise it, for in such case the judgments of God are reserved for us. For—

"If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

It seems remarkable that the prophets and priests should be associated with the blood of the righteous (v. 13). Yet if we observe the record of these supposed leaders of God's heritage we see that it is a record of blood crying from the ground against them.

Their action is well illustrated by the rulers in the time of Christ. It was the priests who were envious of the Master. It was this class who excited the people to cry, "Crucify him!" Christ had rightly assessed them as "*blind leaders of the blind.*"

"They have wandered as blind men in the streets." (Lam. 4:14).

There was no positive leadership in their teachings and actions, no certain destination to their idolatries; they were but ready to fall into the ditch.

As the original custodians of the Law the priests were to instruct the people of the defilement associated with the blood of a dead man. The very proximity to death was defiling, and required ceremonial cleansing in a specific way. But now they added blood to blood themselves, making no effort to cleanse their ways (v. 14). Their wicked deeds brought them low, even in the eyes of their captors, so that they also despised them (v. 15).

Zephaniah the prophet speaks in like manner of the degraded condition of Judah,

"Woe to her that is filthy and polluted. Her **prophets** are light and treacherous persons: her **priests** have polluted the Sanctuary, they have done violence to the Law. (Zeph. 3:4).

Jeremiah had previously warned of the coming day of cleansing,

"Because they have forsaken Me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents . . .

"Therefore this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor The valley of Hinnom, but, The valley of slaughter" (Jer. 19:4-6).

Moses had indicated that the land was holy, because it was the habitation of God, and when wickedness was found in it, it could only be cleansed by the blood that had sinned (Num. 35:33)—

"So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it."

There is a spiritual aspect to this point which has a decided bearing upon the principle of salvation. As we have observed, "*We are the Temple of God.*" This thought, combined with the fact that "there is no man that doeth good and sinneth not," impresses the lesson of the necessity for a cleansing sacrifice. This we know has been illustrated from the Garden of Eden, by means of typical sacrifices, and was clearly manifested in the sacrifice of the Savior, whose blood was poured out as a representative of the race that had sinned.

It is God's purpose to dwell with us and in us in the fullest sense. This is set forth by the repeated references and types under the Law, both in the cleansing of the Tabernacle and priesthood, and the general cleanliness exacted from the whole congregation. It is carried into the spiritual by the allusions to cleanliness of character, thought and speech required of those who have been called to become constituents of the heavenly Jerusalem.

(TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH, IF THE LORD WILL)

NO OTHER SAVING STANDARD

There are some who say, "That was all very well for Christ and his apostles, but we are not Christ nor his apostles." Those who speak in this style give evidence that they are yet strangers and foreigners, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel; for the house of God is one, and the principles appertaining to one part belong to all. John says:

"He that saith he abideth in him ought himself so to walk **EVEN AS HE WALKED**" (1 John 2:6).

And Paul tells us concerning his own case that he obtained mercy that Christ might set him forth—

". . . for a **PATTERN** to them that should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" (1 Tim. 1:16).

He also plainly commands us to be followers of him AS HE WAS OF CHRIST" (1 Cor. 11:1). From this it will appear how unscriptural and dangerous is that style of talk which would seek to excuse modern believers from aiming at the standard exhibited in Christ and the apostles.

THERE IS NO OTHER SAVING STANDARD. If we fail of this, we fail altogether, for it is the standard by which we are to be tried. The standard MEN set up for themselves and one another will be nowhere in the great day of judgment.

Men may comfort themselves now in measuring themselves by themselves, and by the wicked world outside; but where will be their consolation when Christ refuses to try men by any rule but his OWN?
—Bro. Roberts.

"Set Thine House in Order"

Hezekiah was a very good king. He had great zeal, for he rooted out all idol worship in the land. He had much faith, for he stood up against the mighty host of Assyria, when all nations were falling before it. And he was very careful to be obedient to all God's commands (2 Kgs. 18:4-7):

"He removed the high places, brake the images, cut down the groves . . . He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.

"He clave to the Lord, and departed not; and the Lord was with him, and he prospered whithersoever he went forth.

"He spake to the people saying, Be strong and courageous. Be not afraid of the king of Assyria, for there be more with us than with him.

"He rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not."

He was the greatest of all the kings of Judah. And God wrought for him one of the greatest deliverances recorded in Scripture. The most powerful nation on earth, Assyria, came to destroy Judah in its sweeping march of conquest. Hezekiah put his faith in God, and defied the Assyrians (2 Chr. 32:20-23):

"For this cause Hezekiah prayed and cried to heaven . . . And the Lord sent an angel which cut off all the mighty men of valor in the camp of the king of Assyria . . .

"Thus the Lord saved Hezekiah . . . and many brought presents to Hezekiah, so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth."

A glorious reign, with a fitting climax. A mighty deliverance in the sight of all nations, so that all nations sought his favor. Continuing in 2 Chr. 32:24:

"In those days Hezekiah was sick to death, and prayed unto the Lord. And He spake unto him, and He gave him a sign."

Turning back to the record in 2 Kgs. 20:1:

"In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah came to him and said unto him. Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live."

God said he had done well. The time had come for him to rest. He was 40 years old. He had a good record and God was willing to terminate his period of trial and probation.

"The righteous man is taken away from the evil to come" Is. 57:1.

But Hezekiah was not ready, and he prayed to God to live. In this, he questioned the wisdom of God, and rejected His merciful rest. Having failed in this test, his life was lengthened for further testing and trial. (In the added period his evil son Manasseh was born, the cause of Judah's downfall—Jer. 15:4). Continuing with the next verse in 2 Chr. 32 (v. 25)—

"But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up. Therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem."

"Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, God left him to try him, to know all his heart.

In his pride he showed off all his possessions and glory to the ambassadors from Babylon. There was not a thing that he failed to display. Humility and prudence were alike forgotten. God directly connects this incident (Isa. 39) with the later carrying of all these treasures into Babylon, as cause and effect.

Here was Judah's first dealing with Babylon. The Babylonians get a full catalogue of all their possessions, and see Judah as a small country with much wealth. This incident sowed the seed for later conquest and plunder.

Instead of being permanently impressed with the power and terror of God—the consideration that first caused them to send the ambassadors—they find a foolish little king wrapped up in his own glory and vainly displaying his treasures, and the glory and power of God—*Hezekiah's real treasure*—is forgotten.

The prophet Isaiah is sent to rebuke him, and tell him the consequences of his foolishness:

"All that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store, shall be carried to Babylon. And thy sons shall they take to be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."

Hezekiah was flattered by the attention of the great king of Babylon, and drawn into exposing his foolish vanity. God, we are told, was trying him to see what was really in his *heart*.

What was wrong with Hezekiah showing all his possessions? Why was God's judgment so severe upon so good a man? It is the same lesson man never learns: "*No flesh should glory.*"

Many times God strikingly demonstrates His utter abhorrence of glorification of the flesh. Sometimes the retribution is slow—sometimes it is terribly sudden. Herod gave not God glory—

"Immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the spirit" (Acts 12:23).

All glory belongs to God, and He is very jealous. *He* will dispense glory at the last day to those whom He chooses to honor. Until then, all man's glorying is in vain and abominable. The flesh is so unclean and corrupt that any attempt to glorify it is the height of presumption before God. How man loves to bedeck and glorify his vile body, and to parade his worldly possessions, purchased through unfaithful stewardship of his Lord's goods!

Hezekiah replies to the divine rebuke:

"Good is the Word of the Lord which thou hast spoken."

He recognized and accepted the justice of God's condemnation. Picking up again in 2 Chr. 32, the next v. (26):

"Notwithstanding he humbled himself for the pride of his heart, so that the wrath of the Lord came not in his days."

"He said moreover, There shall be peace and truth in my days."

Not just peace, but peace *and* truth. He recognized their relationship. He determined, henceforth, as long as *he* lived, that the evil should be averted and peace prolonged by a rigid and well-pleasing conformity to God's way of truth.

Ecclesial News

BIRMINGHAM, Eng.—174 Edmund Street —Memorial 11 a.m.; Lecture 6:30 p.m.; Bible Class Thursday 7:30 p.m.; Sunday School 11 a.m.

BOSTON, Mass.—355 Newbury St. — Sunday School 10:30 a.m., Memorial 11:45; Lecture first and third Sundays 2:30 p.m.

BUFFALO, N. Y.—O.F. Temple, Kenmore & Myron Aves.—Memorial 10:15 a.m.; S.S. 11:45; Bib. Cl. Wed. 8 p.m.; Lecture 3rd Sun. of mo., Oct. - May.

CROYDON, Eng.—Ruskin House, Wellesley Rd.—Memorial 11 a.m.

DENVER, Colo. — 432 South Emerson St. — Memorial 11 a.m.; Sun Sch. 10 a.m.

DETROIT, Mich.—15586 Normandy—Memorial 10 a.m.; Sunday School 11:30.

FLAXCOMBE, Sask., Canada

HAMILTON, Ontario—7 Willow Crescent.

HAWLEY, Pennsylvania.

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HOUSTON, Texas—8008 Junius St.—Sunday School 10 a.m.; Breaking of Bread 11; Public Lecture every first Sun. 7:30 p.m.; Wed. Eureka Class 8 p.m.

It is our unhappy duty to report to the Brotherhood that recently a group of our members saw fit to enlarge their fellowship to include Central. There were 12 in this group, leaving us with 30 members and 2 associate members (living at a distance).

This ecclesia still holds to the position taken some 30 years ago by a number of ecclesias who separated from the Central brethren on certain questions involving matters of doctrine and walk. Up to the present time we have seen no safe nor scriptural way open whereby, in strict adherence to the principles of the Truth, we could depart from the stand we took at that time.

The group known as the "Greer fellowship" in Texas also wholeheartedly accept this same Statement of Faith, without reservation. This is shown by the following quotation from the first paragraph of a letter received Dec. 7, 1953, from bro. R. Greer, Lampasas, Tex:

"In regard to your inquiry of our basis of fellowship here at Lampasas: We believe and teach that we are the only people that truly meet on the Amended B'ham Statement of Faith."

While we believe that under ordinary circumstances the BASF, where firmly believed and upheld, is sufficient as a basis of fellowship, yet, in the case of those who in the past were known to

have wrong doctrine and yet supported the BASF, we feel that such false doctrine **must first be repudiated** before fellowship is possible.

It is a well-known fact that bro. A. D. Strickler, whose writings gave rise to what is known as the "clean flesh" doctrine that caused the Bereans to separate from Central, always firmly stated his support to the BASF. There is a statement signed by him in the Christadelphian, Oct., 1923, pg. 468, in which he says he does accept everything in the Statement of Faith.

May we remind the battered Brotherhood how the Ecclesia of the first century became the Apostate church of today. Almost imperceptibly, little by little, they became defiled by human tradition, and died. They had been influenced by thinking not in strict accordance with "the Law and the Testimony." Their faith was perverted and their practice marred because they rebelled against the knowledge of God and failed to "come out." The Ecclesia (called-out) are not blinded by the god of the world, not devoted to mammon, not ignorant of the Scriptures, not subject to the commandments of men. These characteristics belonged to the Laodicean cast-out.

We have welcomed to the Lord's Table the following visitors: bro. & sis. S. S. Wolfe, sisters Ruth Booker and Jessie Hatcher (Lampasas Ecclesia); bro. & sis. Oscar Beauchamp (Pomona); bro. & sis. Russell Frisbie (Baltimore); bro. & sis. Duane Lucus, bro. Joe Banta (San Antonio). (The San Antonio Ecclesia have since enlarged their fellowship to include Central).

May we put our trust in Him—may He be our strength, the pure and motivating force of ALL our thought and action—until He comes and afterward. —bro. Chas. Banta.

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KIDDERMINSTER, England.

LAMPASAS, Texas—1604 Ave, "I" East—Memorial 11 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 10 a.m.

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LETHBRIDGE, Alta., Can.—633 7th St.—Memorial 11 a.m.; Sunday School 12:30 p.m.; Lecture 7:30 p.m.; Bible Class Wednesday 8 p.m.

We pray that during the coming year God's Blessing will be with the work of publishing and editing the Berean Magazine, in such trying times. It is a work greatly "needed in these closing days of the Gentiles, and the Laodicean state seems to have crept over many. The articles of late tend to strengthen the few who are still holding out for purity as well as unity.

To the brethren & sisters scattered abroad we send loving greetings in the Master's Name. We are very sorry to announce the following 6 have left us, and have extended their fellowship to Central: bre. & sisters S. T. Batsford, Oliver Bowley, and R. Neville. We are pleased to announce though, that our bro. R. Neville has been joyfully received back, recognizing his mistake in departing from us. Also bro. & sis. C. D. Batsford (from whom we have withheld fellowship for 4 years) have joined and been received into Central.

Our deepest sympathies are extended to our bro. A. P. Perry in the loss of his sister-wife, Elizabeth Ann Perry, 70 years, who fell asleep Nov. 16, 1953, and was laid to rest on Nov. 19, in Mountain View Cemetery, awaiting the return of the Master who is the resurrection and the life. Under-signed spoke words of comfort to relatives and brethren and sisters on this sad occasion. We are sure, like the sisters of Lazarus, had our Lord been here our sister would not have died, but the day is near when he will raise her to stand with us before our great Judge and Rewarder. Sincerely, your brother in Christ Jesus, —Wm. Blacker.

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LONDON, Ont. — Orange Hall, 388 Clarence St.—S.S. 10:15 a.m.; Memorial 11:30; Lecture 7 p.m. Wed. Class, WCTU Hall, Clarence St. ½ blk. N. of Dundas 8 p.m.

MASON, Texas

MELBOURNE, Australia

MIAMI, Fla.—3428 S.W. 65th Ave. — Sunday School 10 a.m.; Memorial 10:30.

MONTREAL, P. Q., Canada—YMCA Bldg., 1000 Gordon Ave., Verdun —Memorial 11 a.m.

NEWPORT, Mon., England—Clarence Hall, Rodney Rd. (opp. Tech. Col.) —Memorial 11 a.m.; Lecture 6:30 p.m.; (3rd Sun. of month —Supplem. B. of B. after lecture).

NEW TREDEGAR, Mon., Eng. — Workman's Lesser Hall—Memorial 6 p.m.

PAPAKURA, New Zealand

PLYMOUTH, England—O. F. Hall, 148 Union St.—Breaking of Bread 11 a.m.; Lecture 6:30 p.m.; Bible Class Thursday 7:30 p.m.

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TORONTO, Ont.—294 Glebeholme Blvd.—Memorial 11 a.m.; Bible Study 7 p.m.; Bible Class Wednesday 8:15 p.m.

October and November were two active months. The following visitors encouraged and strengthened us:—bro. & sis. John Fotheringham and sisters Clara and Marilyn Sparham (Hamilton); bro. & sis. W. D. Gwalchmai Sr. and sis. Louise Martin (London); bro. G. V. Growcott and sis. Anne Growcott (Detroit). Bre. Fotheringham and Growcott gave us words of exhortation by which we were refreshed and comforted. —bro. G. A. Gibson.

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WHANGAREI, New Zealand.

WICHITA FALLS, Texas—Box 343—Sunday School 10 a.m.; Memorial 11.

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WORCESTER, Mass.—Grandview Hall, 21 Grandview—S. S. 10 a.m.; Mem. 11.

It has been some time since our last ecclesial news, and a lot has transpired. The "reunion" movement has plowed a deep furrow in the Brotherhood, to the sorrow of many who have found that it has not been on a sound scriptural basis (and a few, we rejoice to note, have taken their stand with us again). We believe there will be many true-hearted brethren and sisters who, coming to the knowledge of the unsoundness presented in this movement, will do likewise.

It has been the policy of those pushing "reunion" to cover up the main issue of the separation in 1923. In correspondence with bro. K. R. MacDonald of Whangarei, N. Z., in 1947, the editor of the "Christadelphian Magazine" said: "We have nothing to disavow," and "There never was cause for separation." The bre. and sis. in Worcester, with the bre. and sis. in Whangarei, are in agreement with the action taken by the Berean ecclesias formed at that time, and are satisfied that **the things represented were so**, and we are unaware of any change of heart.

We regretfully are forced to recognize the evidence that there is "respect of persons." The letter of the "Christadelphian Magazine" editor to the "Advocate" editor (published in the August "Christadelphian") is surely a revelation of inconsistency. While he insisted that the Strickler elements

should not be required to make any renunciation, and demanded an agreement forbidding "bringing up the past," yet in his letter to the "Advocate" editor he goes back 60 years, brings up **all the past** of the Andrew-Williams controversy, and closes his letter by saying that because false doctrines have been taught and fellowshipped, they **must be "adjured"** (meaning to disavow, renounce, recant, repudiate, retract) before they can be restored to our (Central) fellowship. **Why the difference?** Is not this using the Word of God in respect of persons?

On Apr. 5 we were encouraged to welcome back to our fellowship our bro. Wilbur Buchanan after a separation of a number of years.

It is with deep sorrow we have to announce the death of our bro. Albert Preece. He had been in poor health for a few years past. Having the misfortune of losing his sight made it quite difficult for him to get around. He was very patient in his affliction and looked forward to the meetings—being present whenever possible, feeling that he derived that strength from the spiritual food which enabled him to carry on.

He was present at the meeting on Nov. 29; he fell asleep on Dec. 5. The day before he seemed to be feeling well up to 4:45 p.m., at which time he complained of being very tired. He retired, and a few minutes after 5 went into a coma, and so remained until 3 a.m., when he fell asleep in Jesus. .

Our hearts go out in sympathy to his sister-wife and relatives, but we feel sure it will not be long before the Master's return to awake the sleeping dead in Christ, and loved ones meet again. Our prayers are that it be soon.

Bro. Ricketson (Boston) spoke words of encouragement of our Faith and that glorious Hope. Many were present on this sad occasion—a testimony to the esteem and love in which our brother was held. We will miss him very much, and the loss to his sister-wife and daughters can only be counteracted by the comforting power of the Word of God.

We are convinced that he continually endeavored to be a faithful servant of God, and we are cheered by the promise of the immortal Hope that we shall see him again soon, with others of "like precious Faith" as we stand before him who said:

"I am the Resurrection and the Life; and this is the will of Him that sent me, that everyone that seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him the last day."

This was our brother's hope, and we pray for its realization. Bro. Preece was baptized in Worcester on Mar. 19, 1915.

We are at the end of the year 1953, and about to enter 1954. Will this year bring the Master's return? There is every indication that we shall not have to wait much longer. The Signs of the Times and the movements of the nations are indicative that we can expect his return at any moment. His commission to the Household is: "WATCH!—for ye know not the day nor the hour: what I say unto you I say unto all—WATCH!"

With much love to the Household from the bre. & sis. in Worcester. —bro. R. Waid

Correspondence

Beloved brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus,

What we see now is the latter-day falling away. This has always been expected and looked for by discerning brethren. It is a condition that is not to be expected to get better, but rather worse.

The only thing for us to do—even if we must stand alone—is to hold out for purity and holiness, "Without which," we are told, "no man shall see the Lord."

This is a time when it is good to have our house built on a rock so that the present times of weakness and unrest, the prevailing winds of doctrine that are troubling the brotherhood, will not be able to move us from our foundation.

It is a time to examine carefully the things we stand for as children of God and brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus. The need is to look carefully to OURSELVES as individuals to see how we measure up to the requirements that will be expected, or exacted, of the few who will be associated with the Lord in the work that he will do in the earth when he comes.

"Happy is the man," says David, "who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." It is good to know when the way is rough and uncertain that God will direct the steps and show the way to those who walk in His ways and cast their cares upon Him in prayers and supplications.

Of ourselves we would not be able to maintain in these times a course of true godliness, were it not for the directing hand of God. But this divine power and guidance is given only in the case of those who have pure hearts, clean hands and sincerity and truth in humble submission to God as the basic principle of their lives.

Where there is insincerity or self-glorification, or the cares and pleasures of the world entering in, God is not there to lead and direct the way. These will no doubt be overwhelmed and swallowed up by the tendency of the times, and be found like the unwise virgins with no oil in their lamps when the Lord comes.

The few of us who are able to hold on (with God's help) to the old position should be careful and diligent, as well as thankful, and see that we RISE TO THE OCCASION NOW AFFORDED US to make the most of what, in the mercies of God, has been given us—that we might be ready against that day just ahead when we will stand before the Lord.

To stand for the Berean way will not save us unless we UPHOLD IT AND LIVE BY IT IN ALL ITS REQUIREMENTS. Those who are left of us when these troublesome storms are over should see to it that the Truth as it is in Jesus will henceforth be our one great love and devotion, even to the end.

In that way it will avail us much that we have been able to weather this present upheaval and not grow cold as Jesus says many will do, Your affectionate sister,

Jessie Hatcher, Hiland Court, San Saba, Texas.

(We have taken the liberty of publishing this extract from a personal letter, because we believe it so well expresses the meaning and challenge of this present sad and trying—but in many ways stirring and glorious—time).

1954 Annual Texas Gathering

(If the Lord will)

At Hye, Texas, beginning at 11 a.m., Tues., July 27 and ending after the Sun morning meeting, Aug. 1. For full information write: Bro. E. W. Banta, 7012 Sherman St., Houston 11, Texas.

1953 Texas Gathering Report

The Texas Gathering was again a great success. The brethren from different parts of Texas, and some from other states and Canada, were present. At our opening service Sunday morning at 11 a.m. our bro. Pickford from Canada spoke to us, preparing our minds for the breaking of bread. The open structure was filled with brothers and sisters and a few strangers.

Bro. S. S. Wolfe of Texas gave us a good exhortation at 3 p.m. Then bro. Beauchamp of California gave a lecture at 8:00. This we felt gave us a good start, even better than our previous gatherings, there being a goodly number present, and that eagerness to get all of the spiritual upbuilding from these good lectures.

On Monday there were not quite so many present as some of the brethren had to go to their work. It is hardly possible for all of the brethren to get their vacations set for the time of the gathering. This number began to increase again towards the end of the week. The grounds were full of campers all week. At the end of the week they began to double up at some of the camps. This they all enjoyed, for they had "all things common," so to speak.

These days slipped by very quickly. On Tuesday evening bro. Growcott and sis. Anne Growcott arrived from Michigan. Bro. Growcott gave the lecture on Tuesday at 8 p.m.

The principal speakers were bre. Beauchamp, Pickford and Growcott. Others who helped in speaking were bre. John Eastman and S. S. Wolfe. There were 3 speakers (of about an hour to an hour-and-a-half) each day, at 11, 3 and 8 o'clock.

As the Gathering drew near to a close we had an application for immersion from Miss JANETTE TUNNELL, the daughter of brother and sister Olen Tunnell of Wichita Falls, Texas. On Sat., Aug. 15, after a close examination by a number of brethren, Janette was accompanied to the river banks by a goodly number of brothers and sisters to rejoice with her in putting on that robe of righteousness, in obedience to Christ's command, "Repent and be baptized."

While we were gathered together on the banks of the river to witness the immersion, one brother gave us a short exhortation that was fitting for the occasion. Then a brother was called on for a word of prayer, after which a brother escorted Janette down into the waters where there was a suitable place for the immersion.

After the applicant repeated her full name, she was asked, "Do you believe in the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the things concerning the Name of Jesus Christ?" After her confession that she did, she was then, in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, lowered into the waters of baptism. It was a very simple, beautiful, and deeply moving ceremony.

At the Sunday morning Memorial service, at 11, on behalf of the brethren and sisters, bro. Pickford gave her the right hand of fellowship. May she run well the race she has begun, that she might have a portion in the Kingdom of God.

Brother Growcott gave us our closing exhortation. All were very attentive, as we realized that this was our last feast together on those things that we love so dearly. The attendance was the best it has been for many years, well over a hundred broke bread on the final Sunday.

At the Business Meeting, bro. Emmett Banta, 7012 Sherman, Houston 11, Texas, was elected secretary for the coming year. Please address all correspondence to him. Bro. Banta will (God willing) announce the date and arrangements for the 1954 Gathering as soon as they are settled. Your brother in the One Hope, Erby Wolfe.

A Letter to Our Children

Hello, dear children:

This first month of 1954 we are going to take a trip from New York where we visited last month all the way to Toronto, Canada.

Let us hurry now and catch an imaginary airplane and fly to Toronto. This will take over 2 hours. We look out the right window as we near Toronto and see a large group of lights at the west end of the city, on the shore of the lake. After we have landed we quickly take a bus from the airport back to Toronto. As we enter the city we find that the lights we saw are coming from the Canadian National Exhibition. (Those boys and girls who live somewhere near Toronto have probably visited this park.)

This is where things from all over the world are brought to be displayed. There are 8 main buildings—Motor Bldg., British Bldg., Flower Bldg., Manufacturers Bldg., etc. We are going to visit the Flower Bldg. Here we shall see the wonderful flowers God has given us to enjoy. As we walk up the wide path to the entrance there are small plants of different colors made in a design and cut so that it looks like an immense rug.

As we enter the doorway we see the most beautiful garden we have ever seen. It reminds us of a garden in the Bible—can you name it? Yes! you are right—the Garden of Eden. That must have been many times lovelier than this one, and we are told the whole earth is soon to be made beautiful like that. Will it not be a wonderful place to be! (Read about Eden in Genesis 1, where God created the earth.)

Let us turn to our right, walking down the row where the prize flowers are. We see some flowers larger than your mother's largest pie plate, and some smaller than your fingernail! Moving on we come to some plants we find to be very sharp when we touch them—cactus. (Those of you living in the south of the USA will know this plant, which seems very strange to us here.)

Next we come to a separate garden with a stream running through it. We see palm trees, and orchids, and then way over in the corner we see lilies. Can you think of a Scripture verse where it mentions lilies? Of course, Matt. 6:28.

We all know how splendidly kings and queens are dressed when they are crowned, and Solomon must have been dressed something like that, yet Jesus says that "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" beautiful lilies that God has made. No one can make artificial flowers to compare with the lily, although man has tried. Let us try to think of all the places in the Bible that mention flowers. Then get Mommy and Daddy to check them off and tell you the ones you omitted. Or if you like, you can write me a letter and tell me the ones you remembered.

We walk up and down the rows of beautiful flowers of all colors thinking of the beautiful flowers we will see when Christ comes. What a wonderful place this earth is, that God has given to man! As we leave this display and stand at the door, we look down the path we came up, we see at the very end of the path a large crown used in the display for the recent coronation of the queen of England ("coronation" means "crowning"). Once again the return of Jesus comes to our mind—he will be crowned "King of Kings." (If we are looking forward to the Kingdom, so many things we see will remind us of it, and make us try harder to do what pleases God, so that we will be there.) —Uncle Joe
(Write to: Joseph Jackson, 77 Glenwood Crescent, Toronto 13, Canada).

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