

But, mark you, the sinner must continue to abide in this city of refuge as long as the high priest liveth—i. e., as long as Christ continues in the priestly office, which will be until he is able to present all the redeemed who abide in him under the New Covenant conditions faultless before the throne of God, at the end of his Millennial reign as King and Priest. Then, being made actually perfect by the great Redeemer-Physician, they will be able to stand, not in the imputed or

reckoned righteousness of another, but in their own glorious perfection, yet never forgetful of the great atoning sacrifice, and the patient work of restitution which made possible such a glorious consummation.

Like the cities of refuge, Christ is easy of access to all who diligently seek him, and who have no will in opposition to righteousness, nor to any of his measures of just and righteous discipline.

ISRAEL RENEWING THE COVENANT

[This article was a reprint of that published in issue of September 15, 1895, which please see.]

VOL. XXVIII

ALLEGHENY, PA., NOVEMBER 1, 1907

No. 21

VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER

THORNS, THISTLES AND THE CURSE

As a benevolent feature of the curse or sentence of God upon our race because of Original Sin, we are told that God said to Adam when driving him forth from Eden, "Thorns and thistles shall the earth bring forth unto thee . . . and thou shalt eat bread in the sweat of thy face." Without the thorns and thistles and battling with them man would have found life too easy, and would in indolence have sunken into depravity more rapidly than he has done.

But the curse is to roll away—times of restitution are at hand when the great King, Messiah, will exercise his power among men for their uplift; and when the great demoralizer, Satan, and his associated demons will be restrained. Then the thorns and thistles would be a real menace to man's rapid rise, for they with the insect pests would serve to absorb his vitality and hinder him from intellectual progress.

We should expect, therefore, that now or very soon some means would be found for coping with and subduing these pests. Already science has done much to combat the insect foes by washes, sprays, etc. But now from governmental institutions we have the glad message that thorns and thistles may be easily vanquished—by a cheap chemical spray which kills the weeds, while non-injurious to grain, etc. It is even claimed to be beneficial to some varieties of the latter.

The Technical World says:—

"It is estimated that weeds cut down the yield of grain in this country at least twenty per cent. Under these conditions agriculturists have for several years occupied themselves in the attempt to discover a chemical that can be used for spraying grain-fields. To make it a success it is necessary that the chemical should destroy the weeds, but leave the cereals uninjured. . . . Numerous methods of extermination have been tried and abandoned because they were ineffective, injured the grain crop, poisoned stock, or were too expensive.

"From this it is evident that any means that can be found to destroy these pests will mean one of the greatest discoveries for agriculture that has ever been made. No mechanical invention in farm machinery will compare with it in importance.

"It can now be said with certainty that such a discovery has been made. The first successful experiments were attempted in June, 1906, by the Agricultural College of the University of Wisconsin. The work has been carried on under the direction of Prof. R. A. Moore.

"The experiments carried on consist in spraying the field with a ten-per-cent. solution of iron sulphate. The idea of controlling wild mustard by this method was conceived last year at the university experiment station. The work was based on information derived from Germany, where experiments had been tried on mustard. Plans were laid to make tests on the university farm as soon as the wild mustard appeared. No machine for the purpose is made in this country. A sprayer costing \$135 was imported from Germany. The tests on the university farm were entirely successful. Professor Moore then experimented on other Wisconsin farms, in Dane, Kenosha and Waukesha counties and at Lynn, Lyons county, Minn. As far as known these are the only experiments that have yet been made in this country and in every case there is evidence that the weeds have been annihilated, while there has been no perceptible injury to the grain. The

grains that have been tested are oats, barley, wheat and spelt. No tests have been made on rye in the United States, but Prof. Staglich has had success in spraying rye in Europe. Experiments are also being made on Indian corn, and the results so far have been successful. The only effect that is seen on the grain is the blackening of the lower and older leaves that are doomed to wither eventually, while the young leaves, that bring the cereal to maturity, are unharmed. There are no complaints from any center of deterioration either in the quality or quantity of the grain crop sprayed. There has been no difference observed in the time of ripening. No tests have been made in this country on clover or grasses, but experiments made in Scotland show that in no case was damage done to the young clover or grass, while the mustard was entirely destroyed.

"So far the sulphate-of-iron solution is found to act definitely on mustard, yellow-dock, cockle-bur, smart-weed, rag-weed, and Spanish needles, while there is every reason to believe that it will destroy Canada thistle. . . .

"It is at once apparent that every section of the country will share in the benefit of this discovery. The various weeds that iron sulphate will destroy are found to prevail in different localities. The white daisy is familiar to Eastern farmers, the rosin-weed to Western, wild mustard is widely scattered, and Canada thistle grows in most of the Northern States."

Nor is this all that is making ready for "times of restitution," when the Scriptures declare "the earth shall yield her increase." A means has been found for

ENRICHING THE SOIL

It has long been known that soil is impoverished by the exhaustion of its supply of nitrogen. It has been known also that there are vast quantities of nitrogen in the air; but no one has known how to get it to reunite with the soil. Beds of nitrogenous fertilizers in far-off lands have been transported at great cost to rejuvenate depleted soils—but the cost is too great for general use. Recently two successful methods have been discovered for separating nitrogen from the air by electricity at a comparatively small cost, and it is confidently predicted that its manufacture on a large scale will soon supply a cheap restorative for earth's rejuvenation.

Meantime another means has been found—"some good microbes have been employed to aid the work of reclamation." These useful *bacteria* operate only in connection with *leguminous* plants—such as the various clovers, vetches, peas and beans. The nitrogen-fixing *bacteria* form nodules on the roots, and these absorb nitrogen from the air and fix it in the soil. This not only causes the legumes to flourish but enriches the soil for different succeeding crops.

A circular before us from the U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., relates the foregoing in other terms, and offers to the public on application the salts in proper quantity free of charge.

Doubtless the same Divine Wisdom which is now supplying man with skill to construct machinery and manufacture electric lights, etc., is operating also in this "Day of His Preparation" in the ways above indicated to remove the thorns and thistles and to cause the wilderness to blossom as the rose. Thank God for the eyes of faith to recognize him as our Deliverer by whomsoever he may send the assistances.

THE NORFOLK CONVENTION

It seems too stereotyped to say so repeatedly, "Our last convention was best of all." Yet how else can we properly report? At Indianapolis we said, "This is surely one of the best conventions ever held, if not the best of all." Nevertheless some who attended it went later on to the Niagara gathering, and said, "This is still better." And now, some who attended all three persistently claim that the Norfolk Convention was best of all. In the Editor's opinion these three seasons of refreshing were all so good as to be beyond comparison. Each, however, had its special features. The last continued longer than the others, and, besides, afforded to many specially favorable opportunities for fellowship *en route*, going and returning; and this we must reckon as one of the special convention blessings. And these comparatively few who went from one convention to another prolonged and increased their spiritual exhilaration as per the Apostle's advice: "Be not drunk with wine . . . but be ye filled with the Spirit."

CONVENTION OF BELIEVERS IN THE ATONEMENT SACRIFICE OF CHRIST—"A RANSOM FOR ALL"

Saturday, Sept. 28th, the friends began to arrive in goodly numbers and full of joyous anticipation of spiritual refreshment. The local friends, joined by several who went early to assist them (the Lord reward them all!), had made excellent arrangements for the comfortable entertainment of all, whose number was about 750—some going and others coming throughout the eight days of the session. So far we have learned of none who went away without a blessing from the Lord.

The opening service at 10 a.m. Sunday, Sept. 29, started with a hymn of praise to God, after which Brother Russell led in prayer, invoking the divine blessing upon the convention, and upon its influence in Norfolk, and on the dear friends far and near whose hearts were with us, and upon the influence of the convention upon the little groups and classes represented—that a holy and blessed experience might result to the comfort and encouragement of many of the saints.

Brother W. W. Murray, as the representative of the local church, then delivered an Address of Welcome and introduced Brother VanAmburgh as Chairman for the first four days of the convention. Brother VanAmburgh at 11 a.m. delivered the first discourse, on "Redeemed"—Titus 2:13, 14. The audience, nearly all "brethren," seemed very appreciative of what they heard.

The general attendance was 600 to 800, except for the publicly advertised discourse of Sunday afternoon on "To Hell and Back," delivered by Brother Russell. On that occasion a close estimate was 2,200, though some guessed double that number. Excellent attention was given for nearly two hours. Some of the foremost people of the city were in attendance. The Mayor, introducing the speaker, without endorsing anything, asked a courteous and attentive hearing. The city was considerably stirred and two ministers attempted a public refutation—the Baptist preaching on "To Hell and to Stay" and the Methodist on "To Hell and be Damned." But "their guns were spiked," we feel sure, so far as those were concerned who received and read the freely distributed WATCH TOWER on "What Say the Scriptures About Hell?" And, by the way, all of our readers are welcome to these TOWERS free, for use amongst their friends. They discuss and explain every Bible text containing the word "hell," and various "parables and dark sayings," which are generally misunderstood.

At 7.30 p.m. Brother Russell spoke again, on "The Hopeless and the Hopeful." (Eph. 2:12, 13.) Many of you already have this through the newspapers which publish a sermon each week.

MONDAY, SEPT. 30

The opening session was devoted to praise and testimony, after which Brother Russell answered Bible Questions propounded by the audience.

At 2.30 p.m. Brother Alex. Graham delivered a very interesting discourse on the text, "Having Harps of God." At 3.30 a Testimony Meeting was held for an hour and a half.

Brother C. E. Fowler spoke in the evening, taking as his topic, "Overcoming—What? How?" The necessity for overcoming the world, the flesh and the Adversary was shown, and that faith and prayer and determination are necessary to success.

TUESDAY, OCT. 1—COLPORTEUR DAY

After a Praise and Prayer Service, Brother Russell preached from the text, "He that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto eternal life." The usual congregation was present and the various features of harvest work were referred to—"colportering," "volunteering," "pilgrim work," and the other numerous ways, great and small, by which all who will—all who love the Lord and the brethren

and the truth—may thrust in the harvest sickle. The wages were shown to be partly present but mainly future.

In the afternoon Brother J. H. Cole addressed the colporteurs on successful methods, and gave very helpful and interesting illustrations along the lines of our circular, "Hints to Colporteurs."

The colporteur praise and testimony meeting in the evening was an excellent one and evidenced the fact that the dear colporteurs are receiving a great blessing and are carrying blessings to others. Some thought this service alone worth all the convention had cost them of time and expense. Many not colporteurs were deeply moved and blessed by it.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 2

Our sunrise prayer and praise service at 5.30 a.m. was attended by about 450 to 500 of the friends. Brother Russell, who led the meeting, pointed out the fact that we are now in the Millennial Dawning and that God's promise is that "He shall help her (the church) early in the morning." (Psa. 46:5.) The unusual hour, the fellowship, the hymns and prayers referring to our hopes of the dawning of Zion's glad morning, all conspired to a holy solemnity and blessed joy.

We had two hours of splendid testimony and praise service, beginning at 10 a.m. One dear brother from the wilds of the North Carolina mountains, with tears of joy on his cheeks, declared that he must go home, for he was so full he could hold no more. But he remained, doubtless realizing with others that holy joy enlarges our hearts and increases our capacity.

At 3 p.m., in the largest Baptist church in Norfolk, about 700 assembled for the discourse on "The True Baptism," by Brother Russell.

In all 53 were immersed. Two colored brethren purposed being baptised the next day in the river, because Southern usage forbade the use of the church fount, but they were not permitted to do so.

In the evening Brother Bohnet delivered a very interesting and profitable discourse on "The Righteous Shall Flourish like the Palm Tree."

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3

Brother A. E. Williamson arrived and became chairman of the convention for its latter half. The day was left open for rest and individual fellowshiping, the only general service being in the evening, when Brother F. Draper delivered a very interesting and helpful discourse on the text, "The Spirit, the Water and the Blood, these three agree in one." Brother Russell departed for Allegheny by the afternoon train. About thirty-five who learned of the time and place were present and gave him a hearty goodbye. As he stood on the rear platform while the train pulled out all joined in singing, "God be with you till we meet again."

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4

After another splendid praise and testimony meeting lasting an hour and a half, Brother M. L. Staples preached on "The New Creation." (1 Tim. 3:15.) Many, we trust, were refreshed and strengthened in purpose.

In the afternoon the harmony of the Great Pyramid's Testimony with that of the Bible was forcibly presented by Brother H. C. Rockwell.

In the evening, following a Praise service, Brother W. J. Thorn addressed the Convention ably on the topic, "Full Assurance of Faith."

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5

Another good testimony meeting of an hour and a half showed clearly that as the convention progressed many of the dear friends became more and more filled with the Lord's Spirit which overflowed from their beaming eyes as well as in their fervent words. Then Brother S. D. Senor delivered an interesting discourse on "Gathering and Scattering."

The afternoon service was a discourse by Brother E. H. Thompson, whose topic was, "The Three Fires of the Atonement Day, and their Antitypes." His address was both interesting and instructive.

After a praise service Brother A. E. Burgess gave the evening address on, "Study to Show Thyself Approved unto God: a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth." He was heard with interest and profit surely.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6

The last day of this great feast opened with another stirring testimony meeting. Then Brother H. Samson spoke pointedly and feelingly on "The Witness of the Spirit."

The afternoon discourse was by Brother A. E. Williamson, whose topic was "The Bridal Garment." A large audience gave closest attention to this portrayal of how the robe of Christ's imputed righteousness becomes through consecration and obedience our Bridal Garment.

In the evening a symposium on *Love* was participated in by Brothers A. E. Williamson, S. Kuesthardt, D. H. Thornton, J. F. Rutherford and F. L. Hall. Then followed a splendid Love Feast, in which all participated with hand and heart and voice, bidding each other goodbye and expressing the hope of meeting soon in the great convention beyond the veil—"the general assembly of the church of the first-borns, whose names are written in heaven."

TWO PASSED ON BEFORE

On the Saturday preceding the convention, Brothers H. Holmes and U. G. Munsell and their wives (all active colporteurs) having arrived a little in advance were active in preparing for and welcoming others. Toward nightfall they went to a boat-landing to meet a party from Boston. There, learning that the boat that night would land at a different pier, the two brethren hastened to it, leaving the sisters to come on more leisurely. But, five minutes later, the two dear

sisters were killed under the wheels of a shifting engine which suddenly came upon them from a freight-yard switch.

The finding of them a few moments later was a harrowing experience for their dear husbands, one of whom remarked, "If it had not been for the truth and its blessed, quieting and hallowing influence I would at once have run to the river and suicided." The Lord's grace and truth greatly sustained both of these brethren and those who sympathized with them in their grief. The remains were taken to their homes in Connecticut and buried there, steps being taken to secure an able presentation of their faith to their gathered friends. The husbands returned then and spent the closing days of the convention—not in mourning, but in praising God for our blessed hope, which forbids our sorrowing as others who have no hope. We have the best of hope for both of the sisters, for their faithfulness and self-sacrificing spirit attested their devotion to God. No doubt their death shed a solemnizing influence over the convention as a whole.

THE TRIUMPH OF GIDEON

Judges 7:13-23.—NOVEMBER 17.

Golden Text—"Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear."—Psa. 27:3.

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

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

Evidently the Lord saw that the Israelites were at this time ripe for a change—that under the adversities inflicted through their enemies they were humbled to such an extent that they would be ready to see where was their fault, and to turn from idolatry again to the Lord. But the Lord wished an agent for his service, and instead of using a supernatural one—an angel—he chose, as usual, to use a man. And he chose, as usual, to use a suitable man, fit for the purpose. Gideon seems to have been a man of middle age, for he had a son at this time of probably fifteen years of age; he was well born, as is implied by the record that he was fine of form and feature.

True, the adage is, "Handsome is that handsome does"; it is true, too, that some who are handsome fail to measure up to their appearance in the conduct of life; nevertheless, it is beyond question that to those who can read character, the face and form, unless marred by accident, indicate the character and the training. The noble, the brave, the generous, the wise, by nature, by birth, show these qualities in feature and form; nevertheless God is not always able to

use as his servants the naturally noblest and finest of the human family. Too frequently with such nobility goes a spirit of pride and self-conceit, which renders the individual unsuited to the Lord's purposes of the present time, when humility and obedience to the Lord are the prime essentials. The Apostle noted this, saying that not many wise, not many noble, not many learned hath God chosen, but the weak things and the ignoble things—rich in faith, heirs of the kingdom. (1 Cor. 1:26.) How gracious is this arrangement which opens the way to the highest divine favor for the humblest who hears the voice of the Lord and responds with humility and zeal! Let the ignoble, then, who have tasted of the Lord's grace, be encouraged to trust that, even though ignoble by nature, the grace of the Lord is able to work in them such a transformation of character that they may in heart, at least, become copies of God's dear Son, and thus be prepared for the finishing touches of our promised "change" in the first resurrection.

As Gideon's band may be considered a figure or illustration of the overcomers of this Gospel age—the church, the little flock—so Gideon himself would fitly represent the Captain of our salvation, whose example we are to follow, and whose character is to impress all his followers. Of Gideon it is declared that he looked like the king's son—that in appearance, form, etc., he had a nobility which marked him as above the ordinary rank and file. So our Lord Jesus is the King's Son, and so all whom he accepts to be of the little band, his little flock, are to be conformed to his image by the power of God working in them "to will and do of his good pleasure"; working in them through a knowledge of the truth;—the knowledge of the exceeding great and precious promises of God's Word. Whatever they are by nature, it is God's design that eventually they shall be like their Lord and Captain, see him as he is and share his glory, honor and immortality.

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

Thus the Lord protected the one whom he had chosen for his servant, and brought him more markedly than ever before the attention of the people, so that when he sent out invitations for volunteers from various quarters, an army of thirty-odd thousand assembled to his standard. But the Lord said to Gideon that there were too many, and that all were not of the kind desired. From the human standpoint the thirty-two thousand of Israel had no show of conquering the hundred and thirty-five thousand of their enemies (Judges 8:10); but from

the standpoint of faith in God, who called them to this service, victory was certain, though none could foresee in what way it should be brought about.

The Lord had in mind a glorious victory, but it was to be achieved by his might and power alone. The honor due to the human instruments who were privileged to share in it was not to be in their skill and strength in battle, but in their faith in God and in their zeal in obeying his orders, as an evidence of the strength of their confidence in God.

Then the Lord commanded Gideon to prove them. Gideon's army had a chance to see the hosts of the enemy; they had a chance to consider that their enemies were used to warfare while they as a people had for now a long time been accustomed to the peaceable pursuits of agriculture. Accordingly, the first test of faith applied was permission for all the fearful to return home. This reduced the army to ten thousand; yet many if not all of these who first volunteered, but were now rejected, probably had an opportunity a little later on of joining in the battle after the Midianites had been discomfited and were in full retreat. But the ten thousand courageous men, fearless in the presence of an enemy many times their own strength, must have been men of faith in the Lord, men who, in some respects at least, resembled Gideon in their hearts, in their courage, in their trust in Jehovah; nevertheless there were still too many for the Lord's purpose. The next test was a test of zeal. When led down to the brook to drink, all but three hundred halted very leisurely and knelt down to drink, which required the loosening of their armor and unfastening of their swords. But three hundred did not stop to do this, but hastily scooped up a little water and lapped it from their hands. This zeal, inspired by a living faith in God, was just the element of character for which the Lord was looking; and these three hundred "peculiar people," full of faith and active zeal, were the only ones acceptable to God and privileged to share the honors of delivering Israel from a mighty host of oppressors.

Just so the Lord Jehovah contemplates the conquest of the world for Christ (Zech. 14:3); and Christ, like Gideon, is called of God to lead a "little flock" of "called and faithful and chosen" ones (Rev. 17:14) forth to the conquest of the hosts of sin. The selection of Gideon's army was an illustration of the Lord's method in the selection of a "peculiar people" who will share with him the honors of victory in the conquest of sin and all its defiling host.

Of these there is first a call to faith in the Lord, resulting in justification and acceptance; secondly, there is a call to consecration, in full view of the requirements, in full view of the enemy, and our Captain requests all of the justified ones who come to him to sit down first and count the cost, whether or not they are willing to sacrifice their all under his leadership. The large majority, when they come to see the cost, to realize the battle that must be waged between the followers of the Lord and the forces of the world, the flesh and the devil, are rather inclined to say, We prefer not to engage in battle, we are timid, we are fearful, we have not sufficient confidence either in Gideon or in Gideon's God. It is in accord with the Lord's will that such should be considered separate from God's army, though they may have subsequently an opportunity for joining in the battle against evil.

It is not sufficient that we should have faith in the Lord and in the Captain of our salvation and should make our consecration to the Lord's will; but further tests are made with a view to making a final selection of a very special class to constitute the little flock. It will be a test of water—symbolizing the truth. It becomes a very important question to every consecrated one as he is brought to a knowledge of the truth how he will receive it—appropriate it. In the picture or type those accepted of God to be Gideon's little flock used their hands to lift the water to their mouths, a sup at a time, as a dog uses his tongue to lift the water; while the others drank like as a horse who puts his mouth into the water and sucks it. The hand is a

symbol of energy, and we might understand this to signify that the persons most approved of the Lord will use energy and discretion in partaking of the truth—these will not bow down in the mire of human servility, but will maintain their own erectness of manhood and will partake of the water of truth, lifting their heads upward and acknowledging its heavenly origin by whatever stream or channel it may come to them.

The selection complete, the remainder of the brave men were not sent home but to Gideon's tent or headquarters, there to be ready for their share in the battle later. Those whom God would specially use were supplied with peculiar implements: (1) a ram's horn; (2) a pitcher; (3) a lamp, or torch, placed inside the pitcher and thus obscured from the view of their enemies. The three hundred were divided into three companies and the individuals of each company were scattered. They approached close to the enemy and practically surrounded their camp. When Gideon blew, all who heard the blasts made similar blasts upon their trumpets; when Gideon broke his pitcher and let the light of his torch or firebrand gleam forth, the others did the same, blowing meantime with their trumpets and alternately shouting, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." It was the Lord's battle and the Lord's arrangement, and it was carried out as intended; the Midianites awakened from their slumbers panic-stricken, believed themselves surrounded by immense hosts, and fled precipitately, killing one another in their fright and confusion. Perceiving the routes they would take, Gideon hastened with his ten thousand followers to intercept them and to complete the defeat. Meanwhile others of the people, learning of the condition of things, joined in the battle to the ultimate and utter discomfiture of the Midianites, and the destruction of the vast majority of their hosts, including their leaders.

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

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

EACH SHALL GIVE ACCOUNT TO GOD

Romans 14:12-23.—NOVEMBER 24.

Golden Text—"Judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."—Romans 14:13.

Again the International Sunday-School Committee requests Christian people in general to consider the evils of intemperance—the importance of temperance in all things on the part of those professing godliness. Such lessons seem to be all the more important when we perceive that the rush, the push, the hurry, the consumption of nervous energy on the part of people in general, seems to be causing

an increase of nervous and mental disorders and an enlargement of the lists of the insane. Certainly no one claiming benevolence of heart and soundness of judgment could in any sense of the word advocate or encourage intemperance, realizing that it is a fruitful source of crime, depravity, immorality, etc. We note with pleasure the spread of local option and total prohibition in many of the southern States.

Not that such restraints are the highest ideals of liberty, but that—seeing the necessity for the restraints—those who love liberty are willing to share the bondage for the sake of their fellow-citizens, to whom full liberty is admittedly injurious. Either climatic variations or financial and social changes account for the fact that there was less tendency to drunkenness in the days of the Lord and the apostles than there is now, and probably for this reason the Scriptures have less to say respecting this, which is one of the chiefest evils in our day.

But no amount of interest in the temperance question should permit us to read into the divine Word what was not intended by the inspired writers—though we may properly enough draw inferences and conclusions. First of all, we must take the lesson provided for us as we find it. It is a part of the Apostle's discussion of liberty and law, custom and conscience, on questions that were prominent at the time of writing. The Jews were accustomed to observe their law with great exactness, and very properly so. Consequently it seemed a very peculiar lesson for them to be obliged to learn, that they were no longer under the law, hoping for eternal life through the observance of it, but were under grace, hoping for life eternal by the forgiveness of their sins through the merit of the sacrifice of Christ. The Jews at Rome, for instance, had experienced trials and difficulties for a long time in their endeavor to observe the law—the keeping of the Jewish Sabbath Day, the avoidance of meats that had been strangled or offered to idols. When these accepted Christ they had great difficulty in realizing that the Law Covenant under which they had been seeking to please God was at an end, and that they must seek new principles for their guidance in respect to worship, service, self-control. Naturally enough some minds grasped the situation more quickly than did others. Some accepted Christ and felt all the previous bondage to the Jewish ritual; others saw more broadly that Christ had become the end of the Law Covenant to everyone that believeth, and that the law which he had instituted had indeed the spirit of the ten commandments and the Jewish ritual but not the letter of them, and that to him that is in Christ Jesus there is no law except that of love: love to God supremely, love to the brethren and love to our neighbors—a law seen to be very comprehensive indeed when studied, but on its surface quite different from the law of commandments given to the house of servants.

"The New Commandment," or new law of love, left much more to the discretion and judgment of the individual than did the law commandments given at Sinai and written in stones. With the latter there was no discretion, but with the former responsibility for decision rests largely with the individual and his own conscience. Hence some, reasoning broadly, said to themselves, "The Jewish Law Covenant being at an end, its restrictions are no longer in force where they would clash with the law of love and the spirit of a sound mind: I may, therefore, eat such food as I find will be helpful to me, and am no longer forbidden to eat certain kinds." Further, as the mind expanded and grew it was realized that the idols were not gods at all, and hence that the custom of the people to offer the meat to idols before it was sold for consumption had really done the meat no harm, and hence it might be eaten without any disrespect to God if he were acknowledged and thanked therefor.

CONSIDERING THE WEAKER BRETHREN

In reasoning on this question the Apostle leaves no room for doubt as to his conception of the right or wrong of the question at issue. He agreed heartily with the enlightened few that an idol was nothing more than a piece of human handiwork, and that therefore the offering of meat before it as a sacrifice amounted to nothing and did not injure the meat any more than it did the idol god. The Apostle would, therefore, feel free to eat such meat if it came convenient to him, even though he might have preferred to have such as had not been so offered. But while endorsing the position of the more intelligent he sympathized with the less intelligent, realizing that with many of them it would require considerable time to surmount their natural prejudices and give their consciences the proper and sure footing on the subject. In other words, all Jews would need education along this line, and some could take the education more rapidly than others, but the former should be sympathetic with the latter and to a large extent should defer to them.

"BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST"

Our lesson opens in the midst of this argument with the declaration, "So then each one of us should give an

account of himself to God." By these words the Apostle seeks to impress the thought that the weaker brethren are not to judge and censure the others, neither the stronger brethren to judge and censure the weaker. All are to remember that God is the Judge, and that each one needs to criticise himself rather than to criticise his brother—to make sure that he himself has a conscience void of offense toward God and man. Each one so doing may feel sure eventually of the divine approval. The same thought is given in a preceding verse (v. 10), which reads, "For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." Each one of the church is on trial, and our Lord Jesus as the Father's representative criticises and examines the various members of his body, not with a view to cutting them off, but, on the contrary, for their aid and encouragement, assistance and instruction and preparation for the kingdom. As we are now before the judgment-seat of Christ, so during the Millennial age the whole world of mankind will be before his judgment-seat and be separated into two classes, sheep and goats. During the world's judgment the overcomers of this Gospel age, the brethren, the bride, will be with the Lord in his Millennial throne as he promised, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne"; and again, "To him that overcometh will I grant power over the nations"; and again, "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?"—in conjunction with their Lord.—Rev. 3:21; Rev. 2:26; 1 Cor. 6:3.

But not only are we now standing before the judgment-seat of Christ, and day by day rendering up a measure of account in respect to our faithfulness, loyalty, etc., but eventually at the close of this age the decisions will be given by him as he pictures in the parable of the young nobleman. On his return from a far country, invested with full power and authority, he will give to every one in his church according as his work has been—according to his faithfulness in the use of his talents, privileges, opportunities—according to his faithfulness and obedience to the "New Commandment" given to all, that they should love one another as he had loved them. Then every man's work shall be made manifest, however misunderstood in the present time. Some highly esteemed amongst men will be shown to be less esteemed of the Lord, and some little esteemed amongst men will be granted high honors in the kingdom. Therefore, we are not to gauge ourselves entirely by what our fellow-men might think, but to have special respect to the Lord and his judgment of us. Hence the Apostle argues, Let us not, therefore, judge [condemn] one another any more, but let our judgment rather turn to ourselves, to see that nothing in our conduct toward our brethren shall be in any sense of the word contrary to our Master's new law of love. Watching that law carefully, and applying it to ourselves, we will be hindered from any course of conduct which would tend to stumble a brother; and such a love for the brethren as would lead us to the renouncement of our own liberties where necessary would certainly be pleasing in the sight of the Lord and the heavenly Father, and assure us a place and a higher honor than would otherwise be ours.

"FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED"

The Apostle then assures his hearers of his own conviction that there is no such thing as legally unclean or forbidden food from the Lord's standpoint for those who are new creatures in Christ. Love for the brethren, however, should lead us to renounce to some extent our own liberties and preferences lest our exercise of liberty might do injury to some for whom Christ died. His argument is that if we have the love of Christ we will hesitate to do anything that would wound or injure or cause a stumbling of conscience to any member of the body. If Christ so loved them that his death was made available to their salvation, we should so love them as to be willing to coöperate for their assistance and do nothing that might stumble or hinder them. He argued further that having taken a stand for the Lord and for righteousness we should be careful that our outward conduct would conform to this in as large a degree as possible, and that this would mean that we should do nothing that to others would seem to be unrighteous. "Let not your good be evil spoken of," rather exercise yourself along such lines of goodness and in such a manner as will have the approval of all who have respect for religious things. An application of this principle today would seem to be that we who have a clearer knowledge than have some others of the meaning of the Sabbath, for instance, should so conduct ourselves in the observance of Sunday as would bring no disrespect to the Lord nor to his Word. A proper time and occasion may

occur for explaining our higher thought respecting the significance of the Sabbath, but meanwhile let us reverentially keep Sunday, not as under the bondage of the law, but as a great privilege and opportunity for fellowship in spiritual things, better than any we could ourselves devise. The same principle will apply to other matters or outward manifestations in which reverence for God and holy things may have a bearing upon our influence with others. Reverence for all good things is surely appropriate to all who love the Lord and love his righteousness. Increasing knowledge would make us increasingly reverential, not only in heart, but also in outward demonstration.

"THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NOT MEAT AND DRINK, BUT RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE AND JOY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT"

This statement by the Apostle has been grievously misunderstood and misconstrued by some, and interpreted to teach that the kingdom of God is not a real kingdom to come, with Jesus as the King, the church as the joint-heirs in the kingdom, and the world as the subjects, to bless, rule and uplift during the Millennial age. It is used to oppose this thought, the claim being that when the words kingdom of God are used throughout the Scriptures they signify not a real kingdom, but a rule of righteousness, joy, peace, in the hearts of believers. This is a serious misinterpretation of the Apostle's thought. His argument may be paraphrased thus: Abstain, dear brethren, from the use of your liberty in Christ wherever you find that it would stumble the conscience of another or be to his hindrance in any manner. Consider not that the advantages of being counted in as members of Christ's prospective kingdom consist in these liberties to eat and drink what you choose, but rather consider that the blessings we enjoy in the present time as members of that prospective kingdom are the peace of heart, the joy of heart, the righteousness of the Lord and his holy Spirit. These are the blessings of the present time, and not the mere liberties in respect to food. Hence we may readily renounce these liberties if they interfere with the advantage of others, and we will thereby find ourselves increasing in love and joy and peace of the holy Spirit by reason of such sacrifices. The church indeed is the kingdom of God in an embryonic sense—in the sense that each member is here being instructed and prepared for the duties and privileges of the

kingdom to come, especially being developed and tested along the lines of his own fitness for a share in that kingdom. But all of this emphasizes the fact expressed in our Lord's prayer that God's kingdom is to come, and, coming will bring about in the world that condition of things in which eventually God's will will be done on earth as it is now being done in heaven.

Continuing this thought, the Apostle urges (vs. 18, 19) that such service, such self-denials for Christ's sake, are well pleasing to God, and will also have the approval of right-thinking men, and that all the Lord's followers therefore should thus be making for peace and those things and conditions whereby they may edify, strengthen and build one another up. What a precious lesson is here! Oh, that all of the Lord's dear people could catch the spirit of the Apostle's exhortation and see how beautiful it must be in God's sight that his people should emulate the example of their Redeemer in their willingness to deny themselves for the sake of helping others. With this spirit prevailing largely in a company of the Lord's followers, assuredly there would be a great blessing and great upbuilding of one another, a great strengthening of character and great assistance one to the other, and great absence of puffed-up superiority and disdain for those unable to see and appreciate every feature of the divine plan.

"The things that make for peace." Oh, how blessed the congregation of the Lord's people which has a goodly number of such followers of Christ, especially if they be among the leading ones! How their love and peace and unity of spirit would assist them to be kind and generous toward others and helpful—not by ignoring the principles of truth, not by putting the light under a bushel, but by presenting the truth in so kind and gentle a manner that all who are of the truth would appreciate it and be strengthened thereby. How potent the Apostle's argument, "Overthrow not for meat's sake the work of God"—do not jeopardize the interests of either the church or of an individual in it merely for the sake of preserving a non-essential. As the Apostle exhorted Timothy, "Condescend to men of low estate," condescend to the weakest and humblest of the Lord's true followers; come down to them in speech and in conduct that you may be the abler assistant of those who need the uplifting and enlightening influence of the Truth in the spirit.

AN INTERESTING QUESTION ANSWERED

QUESTION.—In Acts 20:28 the reading is peculiar, and seems to imply that the Father, and not the Son, was the purchaser of the race; yet this disagrees with other Scriptures. How should we understand the matter?

ANSWER.—The Diaglott translation is very much better than that of our common version, and reads, "which he hath purchased with the blood of his own"—"Son" being understood.

The question may still arise with some, In what way did the Father purchase the race? We answer, In the same way that he has been the author of the entire plan of salvation. All that our dear Redeemer has done for us has been the carrying out of the great plan of Jehovah, purposed in himself before the foundation of the world. It is in harmony with this that the Father declares himself the Redeemer, "Jehovah thy Redeemer, and the Holy One of Israel." (Isa. 41:14; 43:14; 54:5.) Again we read, "Jehovah is my Shepherd." (Psalm 23:1.) In like manner the Father is the Creator, although all things were made by the Son (as the Father's agent) "and without him was not anything made that was made."—John 1:2.

"ALL THINGS INDEED ARE PURE"

We are not to understand these words of the Apostle to indicate that nothing is impure or unclean. Quite to the contrary. He has elsewhere pointed out many impurities of thought and act, and advised the church against these. Here his words are confined to the subject in hand—nothing indeed is unclean—no kind of meat. He proceeds, however, to point out where wrong might be done even in eating of that which is cleanest, most desirable, or in the exercise of any other liberty—it is evil to the one whose conscience would be injured by it. In a word, conscience is one of our most valuable assets; according to our obedience to conscience will be our standing before the Lord. If, therefore, we violate our own consciences in anything we do, we are doing ourselves injury; or if by word or example we influence others to violate their con-

sciences, however harmless a thing in itself it may be, we are doing them a serious injury, the outcome of which we cannot fully estimate, for it might go on to great and greater ungodliness and eventuate in the second death. Hence, it is good not to eat flesh nor to drink wine nor to do anything whereby thy brother might be stumbled or offended or made weak.

FAITH VERSUS CONDEMNATION

"The faith which thou hast, have thou to thyself before God." That is to say, our outward conduct need not necessarily show all the depth of our knowledge and faith and liberty. God knows the heart, he sees the progress we have made, and he will be the better pleased with us if for the sake of the brethren we do not declare all our liberties at a time and a place when they might prove injurious to others of his dear family. The Apostle proceeds to point out that if we be critical in examining our own conduct and motives we may find something therein very similar in kind to that which we are disposed to criticize in others, though perhaps in relation to a different subject. His words are, "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth." For instance, he who judges another, allows or concludes that that other's motives are inspired by pride or ambition; if he turns his criticism upon himself he sometimes finds something of this kind in his own heart. He who allows that his neighbor is a slanderer and condemns him for it should turn his criticism upon himself to see that his own words are always above reproach—never upon the slanderer. Happy and blessed the person who, seeing faults in others, after careful examination finds himself to be entirely free from these. Such certainly are exceptional characters.

"HE THAT DOUBTETH IS DAMNED"

With the wrong conception before the mind the words of the Apostle sound extremely harsh, "He that doubteth is damned if he eat." The idea conveyed by these words to many minds laboring under the delusions of the "dark