

"THE END OF THE AGES"—CONDITIONS SIMILAR

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you."—John 15:18.

By the word "world" the Lord did not mean Gentiles; else he would have said Gentiles. Had he said Gentiles it would have signified all the peoples not in covenant relationship with God. But when he used the word "world" he seemed to signify the present order of things, and therefore the people of the present order; for there would be no present order except through the people. He would mean those who had religious influence—the representatives of the people.

But the special order of that day was made up of the scribes, Sadducees, Pharisees, chief priests and the Doctors of the Law—those interpreting the law. Those who represented the law, and thus represented the people, would have to do with that order of things particularly. We know that these hated the Lord. As he said elsewhere, they hated the light. They hated him, not because he really did them any harm, but because his teachings, and the light that shone from his life and teachings, were contradictory to themselves, and to their plans, schemes and arrangements. If his words were true, all the plans they had made in all those years would be shown as coming to naught. In proportion as they had confidence in their own plans, Christ and his followers would seem to be fools, trying to do some impracticable thing.

Our Lord's principal opposition, then, came from the religious rulers, the teachers and the Jewish politicians. There were the Sadducee party and the Pharisee party. The Sadducees believed in nothing beyond what they could see. They were agnostics. The Pharisees were a very strict religious sect, pre-eminently the holiness people of the Jews. They were very scrupulous regarding outward forms and ceremonies, but as a class were very haughty, self-righteous and unjust. Whoever fell in line with Jesus' teachings would not have any particular interests in either of these sects or in their teachings—would not especially respect them and consider them the great ones of their nation. While at variance amongst themselves, these religious rulers were one in their opposition to Jesus.

It was these sects, together with the scribes and Doctors of the Law, who incited the people to crucify Jesus. We are not to suppose that these learned men—men of considerable education and intelligence—got out into the streets with the people and hurraed for Barabbas and shouted against Jesus; but rather that they incited the rabble, and themselves assumed a more dignified line of conduct. At all events, their course led to the Lord's death. Not only did they hate the Master, but they hated him with such a bitterness and such resentment as to destroy him. They plotted his death several times, but they could not take him until his hour had come. The Pharisees acknowledged that a great miracle had been performed in the raising of Lazarus, but they determined that Jesus should be destroyed on account of this great miracle, because it would influence the people, and the people would in that same proportion become alienated from themselves.

The high priest, Caiaphas, said, "It is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." (John 11:47-53) The leaders of the nation feared that the people would be so influenced by Jesus' teaching that they would themselves avail nothing, and that "the Romans would come and take away their place and their nation." They said, "We are the guardians of this nation. The government at Rome would pay no attention to this rabble here. If we fail, God's cause in the earth will be blotted out. It is therefore expedient that we should destroy this man." The difficulty was that they had a wrong view of God's cause and of their nation. They were leaving God out of the account. They were thinking that they must do the whole thing. They were forgetting that God is the One All-Powerful and is at the helm.

SHINING OF TRUTH EXPOSES ERROR

As respects the true people of God the Master said, as recorded in our text, "Marvel not if the world hate you; ye know that it hated me before it hated you." We see that it is in proportion to their faithfulness as followers of the Lord Jesus that the Lord's people are hated and persecuted. There was a long period of persecution in the early days of the church—first by Nero, then by Diocletian and others of the Roman Emperors. Then came the general rise of the Antichrist, culminating in the establishment of the great misrepresentation, the counterfeit, of God's kingdom, in the year 539 A. D. These also hated the true church and held them in contempt. The latter were chimerical, was the thought—they were poor thinkers, they took the words of Jesus too literally,

they thought too much about a future kingdom instead of about the present kingdom. Then followed the long night of bloody persecutions, during the entire papal Millennium. [799 A. D. to 1799 A. D.] The true followers were not numerous, and were chiefly the poor of this world—not many great, not many learned—but rich in faith. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"—1 Corinthians 1:26; James 2:5.

Coming down to our day, in proportion as the people of the Lord are following in the footsteps of Jesus they will wish to let their light shine out upon others. In proportion as they let their light shine, it will show the misconceptions and errors of the present order of things in the world. Here in our day as in Jesus' day, truth shows forth and rebukes the error, and those who promulgate the Truth are more or less hated because of this. Today, as in the days of our Lord's first advent, there is a religious system which is more or less mixed up with politics. Its adherents plan all kinds of reforms. They say, "If we can destroy the white slave traffic and the liquor traffic, we shall have nearly brought in the Millennium. Electing wise rulers will help in bringing in the new order of things." But much as we sympathize with these good efforts we perceive that as a whole such plans are not God's plan in respect to the future kingdom. Present institutions are not to be repaired, but replaced by the "new heavens and new earth" conditions.

We must not find special fault with reformers, however, and their efforts to put patches upon the old garments. We are to have sympathy for anything that is making for good, for righteousness. We are to leave the world to do the best they can, and we are to give our attention to God's plan and the great reform he is to bring in. The instruction to us is that we should get ready for a place in the kingdom, and should help other children of God that they, too, may make their calling and election sure, and be ready for the kingdom. That kingdom, which is now just at hand, will be God's agency for destroying sin and exalting righteousness.

PUTTING DARKNESS FOR LIGHT

All this seems like a foolish tale to the world; for it would mean defeat to their projects. It would upset all the plans of Churchianity. If the people thought as we do it would mean great disaster to all the denominations. The people would not be nearly so much interested in building up these systems or in raising money as they would be in seeking to do the work of the Lord in the world. If our view should prove true, and should gain the confidence of the people, to that extent all man-made systems would become unpopular. They would all be put to shame in comparison with the truth. Hence their promoters think that to hide their darkness and call it light is necessary for their prosperity. They think that it is necessary for them to burn our books and to keep our sermons out of the newspapers, etc. All this seems to them to be the wise course. They perceive that they and their systems would utterly fall if our teachings were generally received by the people.

"GREAT, SWELLING WORDS"

These church systems claim that they have witnessed for Christ's kingdom for eighteen hundred years. Roman Catholics say, "We have made a great institution! See the millions of money that we have invested! See how much we are in favor with the various governments; and we are hoping soon to get control of all the governments. Then we will conquer the world!" So say the Methodists, the Baptists, and all the rest of them. "We must conquer the world! This is the way the kingdom must be set up!"

Thus they go about to establish their own plans. When they do study the Word of God, they study it with sectarian spectacles on their eyes; and they think that "the church" is now in the condition soon to cause every knee to bow and every tongue to confess. They say, "If these Millennial Dawn people go about and tell that there is only a 'little flock' in the true church, people will remember that we have been boasting of our big flock. What do you say, Roman Catholic flock? What do you say, Lutheran flock? Methodist flock? Baptist flock? Presbyterian flock? Do we not claim that there are four hundred million Christians in the world? Shall we let an insignificant people come around and say that there are only a handful in the church, and that all the rest of us

are frauds? It is an implication that our great institutions are wrong. If these people are going to turn the world upside down, and bring us into disrepute, we must put them down before it is too late. Something must certainly be done!"

OUR FIERY CHARIOT

So we see there is hatred there. The Lord's true people are striving for a perfect ideal; they are striving for the likeness to the Lord as representatives of our Lord Jesus Christ. But this is not what the religious people hate so much. It is the disturbing of their institutions—the shaking and rocking of their boat. They are afraid that they will be capsized in the sea. It is the spirit of the world in them that hates the Lord's faithful ambassadors. Some of the noble-minded of the world now see somewhat of the truth. This is the more exasperating

to these church people who are not fully in harmony with the Lord.

What this may eventually lead to we do not know. But there are Scriptures which seem to indicate that the closing of the career of the true church will be one of persecution. We understand that Elijah was a type of the church. His last experience was his being carried away in a chariot of fire. It was the agency by which he was taken from the world. So in the close of this world (age) the Lord may take away his people in a fiery trouble—but it will be the chariot to carry them home, to glory, honor and immortality, to participation with Jesus in the divine nature. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him."—Romans 2:7; 8:17; Luke 12:32; 2 Timothy 2:12.

"THESE THINGS" THAT WE MUST DO

"If ye do these things, ye shall never fail."—2 Peter 1:10.

The context preceding the words of the above text shows us that the Apostle has been urging the development of the fruits of the holy Spirit in the heart, and so far as possible in the life—in the words, the deeds, the thoughts. He sums up his argument by saying that those who, following his advice in this matter, add one after another of these qualities and so build up their Christian character, will "never fall." The implication is that there would be some tendency to fall, some testings; and that this development of character would be necessary in order that the individual might be able to stand these tests. So the Apostle's assurance is that those who do not fall, who stand all the tests, will be granted an abundant entrance "into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"—the very thing that all of the Lord's people are invited to share.

We whose eyes of understanding have been enlightened can realize the strength and reasonableness of the Apostle's argument; yet these things have not been much taught in a logical way. Errors of the dark ages have hindered and made void the teachings of the Apostles. The thought given out by the creeds of the past is that only a mere handful would be saved, and that the rest of the world would be banished to an eternity of torture and woe unspeakable. Many of the world have taken this in a light way, have been incredulous—declaring that they would take their chance, etc. Others, who were of the Lord's people, have been frantic in their efforts to save as many as possible from the threatened eternal torture. Some had it that unless they belonged to a certain class, or cult, or had a certain kind of baptism, or turned away from sin and joined some church, they were sure of never-ending and unspeakable suffering beyond this life.

With these ideas in their minds, it is not strange that they were too busy to study the Word of God with sufficient care to see what it really teaches, and that therefore they adopted plans of their own for saving the world. These deluded ones seem to be quite active in what they term soul-saving work. We cannot but admire their courage and zeal, even though it be not according to knowledge. If their premise were correct, then every Christian should be rushing around as though demented, in his endeavors to save the world.

Suppose that a great fire broke out but a few doors from us, that there was no fire department accessible, and that hundreds were in imminent danger of being burned to death, though we were ourselves safe from the fire. Suppose that then some one would say to us, "Come, let us have a Bible Study." We would be sure to answer quickly, "No indeed! There are many people in that building who will be burned to death unless they are quickly rescued!" We would be in such haste and such eagerness to save the lives of the endangered ones that we would stop for nothing else.

DOCTRINAL CONFUSION OF MANY CHRISTIANS

So the great adversary has filled the minds of many Christian people with the vagary that the world is in imminent danger, not of being burned to death, but of being precipitated into a lake of burning brimstone or into an abyss of unimaginable horror and woe, there to be preserved in torture throughout unending ages! He has thus engaged Christians in an imaginary assault upon the devil, to rescue souls from this eternity of torment. Not until our eyes are opened and we see that there is no such provision for the heathen, or for anybody, can we begin to exercise the spirit of a sound mind. When we come to understand God's arrangement, everything changes before our mind's eye. We then see that God has made full provision for the heathen and for all men, and we realize that.

"Faith can firmly trust Him,
Come what may."

We see that our work as Christians is to co-operate with God in the salvation of the church class—not a salvation from eternal torture, but from death, and to glorious inheritance with Christ in his coming kingdom. We see that this great work has been progressing during the Gospel age, and in an orderly manner.

This blessed union with Christ which God has arranged for the church is to be soon consummated by a marriage feast; and then, in the kingdom to be established under the whole heavens, she as his bride will with him have the blessed opportunity of uplifting and delivering fallen humanity, the entire race of Adam, of restoring men, "whosoever will," to the glorious estate which was lost by Adam and redeemed by Christ Jesus the Lord through the blood of his cross. How wonderful it is to realize how all-embracing is God's marvelous plan of salvation—that it includes in its gracious provision not only those now living, but also all who have gone down into the tomb! With the eyes of our understanding thus enlightened, the delusions are taken away from our minds, and we begin to use our reason and to see the beautiful, wonderful things which God planned from before the foundation of the world.

DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION LOST TO MAJORITY

As we reason, we see that the primary consideration with us is our sanctification. "This is the will of God [concerning you], even your sanctification." When we thought that the salvation of the world was dependent upon our feeble efforts here in the flesh, we had little time to study the Bible or to think particularly about our sanctification. Indeed, the thought of sanctification faded away from the minds of the majority of professing Christians; and for a Christian to press the importance of this doctrine was to brand himself as a religious fanatic. The general thought has seemed to be that those who were really thus set apart were surely so small a number that sanctification could not be God's plan for the church. So the many drifted apart from the Scriptures, and thought that only those guilty of most heinous crimes would be punished with eternal torment, and that all others would by some means get into heaven. People have thought, and this thought seems to prevail today to an increasing extent, that unless one dies a murderer or a lawless, disreputable character, he will somehow be saved.

"If a person can squeeze into heaven without any sanctification, so much the better," is the thought. "Do not try to get up too high. Do not try to get one of the chief seats in heaven. Take a lowly place"—crawl in under the gates, perhaps! And thus many have tried to believe that they and their friends would go to heaven. Our Catholic friends have been taught that they must go to purgatory for awhile. But nearly all others have hoped that they would get to heaven at once. This idea of sanctification, of being holy as our Lord was holy, of walking in the footsteps of Jesus, is not the Bible view at all, according to their thought. They did not consider it the Bible view because they did not know the Bible teachings, and because they did not wish to conform themselves to so narrow a way—the broader, easier way was much more pleasant to the flesh. They could not believe that God would be intent upon roasting nearly everybody—surely he would be content to roast the most degraded heathen and the worst characters of Christendom.

OUR "REASONABLE SERVICE"

So these have accepted what seemed to them to be a reasonable moral standard, instead of endeavoring to find out what the Bible calls our "reasonable service." The great Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the church at Rome (Romans 12:1), says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, ac-

ceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." When we get rid of these erroneous thoughts and ideas and get the spirit of a sound mind, we begin to see more of God's wonderful plan—of his justice, wisdom, love, power, of his purpose for his children now, and his arrangement for the world by and by.

When light begins to break in upon the mind, and a glimpse is seen of God's gracious plan of salvation, there is a danger that those whose hearts are selfish and lacking in gratitude will lapse into even greater worldliness, that they will pay very little attention to Bible study for the development of the fruits of the Spirit, feeling that it will be well with them in the future in any event, and they will delve into business, money-making, pleasure etc. Others on the contrary, feel an earnest desire to render thanks to the Lord for his great mercy and love as manifested in his glorious plan of the ages; they seek to know what is the Lord's will for them that they may do it, and say, "The fact that God is not such a demon as to torture eternally any of his creatures, but has so marvelous and loving a plan for all, makes me want to serve him all the more." As the Apostle Paul said, the truth is "to the one the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life," and reveals the real sentiment of the heart.—2 Cor. 2:16.

THE CHRISTIAN'S NEED IN THIS "EVIL DAY"

Thus those who receive the truth in the love of it become students of the Bible. As they study, they learn more and more how each one of the true church is to be sanctified by the truth, that each may be "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." They realize that the church is now being called out to be saints of God, to be separated from the world, and to have a share with the Lord Jesus in blessing and uplifting the whole world in the age to follow this, the Millennial age—now so near at hand. To such the exhortation of the Apostle is, "Add to your faith virtue [fortitude]; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance [self-control, self-restraint]; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love [a broad, generous love, taking in the whole world, even our enemies]."—2 Peter 1:5-7.

The Apostle then adds, "If these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren [inactive, idle] nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." At this juncture the Apostle shows the contrary effect of the spirit of the world upon those who profess to be children of God—the result of a neglect to study and assimilate the Word. He says, "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." Then he counsels all, "Wherefore, the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."—Vs. 8-11.

NEED OF "THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD"

By seeking to know God's will in order to do it, the Lord's people are preparing themselves for the glorious inheritance of the faithful. Fortified by development of character, these will not fall, no matter what the trial that the Lord may permit to come upon them. The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the church at Ephesus, speaks of some who will be able to stand in the "evil day," and implies that a great many at that time will not be able to stand. He declares that those who hope to

stand will need to put on "the whole armor of God." The various pieces of the Christian's armor will then be indispensable, and he intimates that only those fully armored would be ready for the onslaughts of that day.

The Lord did not reveal to the Apostles when the "evil day" would come. They knew that it was then future, but how far into the future they did not know. They did not expect it before their death; for some of them said that they expected to put off the present body, to die, and to awake in the first resurrection, and that they believed the second coming of Christ to be some little time distant. Evidently it was a part of God's plan to keep his people uninformed concerning the exact time of the day of the Lord, until due; but he provided for them that they would be able to stand when the "evil day" arrived, if they would diligently put on the armor.

And now we have come to this "evil day"; and the urgent message to us is: "Put on the whole armor of God!"—prepare yourselves for the great testing that will come, that you may be able to stand! Get ready! Each piece of the armor, each fruit of the Spirit, is a part of the necessary preparation for this "evil day," this "hour of temptation," now present. So these should all be added with great care. Read Ephesians 6:13-18; 2 Peter 1:4-11; Galatians 5:19-26.

WHY THOUSANDS ARE FALLING

This is the time long foretold, when "a thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand." Why will all these fall? Because they have neglected this necessary development of character; because they have failed to put on the whole armor of God; because under the delusions of the adversary and the spirit of the world and of Babylon they have become twisted in their minds. They have tried to raise money for the heathen or for building fine church edifices; they have gotten up church fairs and entertainments, etc.; not appreciating the fact that it is necessary to build up their own characters, that character, built up after the instruction of the Word of God, is absolutely necessary to an entrance into the kingdom of Christ. And so these are falling all around us.

If the whole armor of God was important in the Apostle's day, it is still more important today. We need all that is represented in the breastplate of righteousness, in the shield of faith, in the helmet of salvation, the covering of protection for the intellect, in the sandals of Gospel preparation, in the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. We need that our loins be girt up with truth. Thus shall we be enabled to preserve our vital relationship with the Lord and his house and to daily grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"In the last days," said the Apostle, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Therefore we need to be fully established in the faith, and able to fully trust the Lord. Let us keep the sword of the Spirit sharpened and well in hand, that we may be ready for service in the protection of others and in the defense of ourselves. We need to be continually on the alert respecting our own fleshly weaknesses and besetments, that we may war a successful warfare, and thus share with our Lord his kingdom and crown.

"As I near the time of trouble,

Bid my faith in thee increase:

While the thousands round are falling,

Keep me, keep in perfect peace.

Refuge! Fortress! Thou hast set thy love on me!"

DID JESUS REVILE HIS ENEMIES?

"Who when he was reviled, reviled not again."—1 Peter 2:23.

Naturally the question arises, How shall we harmonize St. Peter's statement in this text with the fact that our Lord denounced the Scribes and Pharisees and Doctors of the Law as hypocrites, as a generation of vipers, etc?

We recall the evidence presented in the Gospels. St. Peter was one of the twelve Apostles and hence was with our Lord continually during his earthly ministry, and evidently, therefore, a very good witness of the fact that the Master did not return reviling for reviling. The import of the Apostle's words was that Jesus did not retaliate. When evil things were spoken of him, He did not speak evil of those who did him injury. He did not call down curses upon their heads, but committed himself to God and left his cause in the hands of divine justice.

The Evangelists record some of these revilings against our Lord. On one occasion his enemies said of him, "He hath a devil and is mad." Again, Jesus himself implied that he was also called "Beelzebub"—prince of devils. The Scribes and the Pharisees acknowledged his works, but denounced him, and

attributed his goods works to Satan. They implied that his birth was illegitimate. They attempted to prove that he was guilty of blasphemy in saying that if the temple were torn down he would erect it again in three days. They did not get the spirit of his teaching, and tried to make out that his statement was sacrilegious. They endeavored to entrap him in his words. They held that if he were really a great man, he would fellowship with them and not with publicans and sinners. Finally they reviled him to the extent of crucifying him between two thieves.

But how was it that Jesus said some very sharp things to the Scribes, Pharisees and chief priests of that day? For instance, he called them "a generation of vipers," "whited walls," "sepulchres full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." On one occasion he said, "Ye hypocrites! Ye can discern the face of the sky; but how is it that ye cannot discern the signs of the times?" Again, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers! How can ye escape the condemnation of Gehenna!" He declared, "Ye are of your father the devil, for his works ye do."

At another time he called them, "Ye fools and blind," "Ye blind guides," and denounced them saying, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them who are entering to go in . . . Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, ye make him two-fold more the child of Gehenna than yourselves. . . . Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint, anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel! Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee! cleanse first the inside of the cup and of the platter, that the outside may be clean also." Were these revilings? Was not St. Peter mistaken when he wrote the words under consideration? Where does the line of difference come in?

JESUS DID NOT STRIKE BACK

We answer. The line of difference is in that our Lord was not striking back at them; his charges against them were made in advance, and were not, therefore, retaliation against something which they had said to him. He did not refer to any one of them as having a devil. He spoke of their system in general as being a pernicious system. If the Lord had not declared that these rulers of Israel were hypocrites, how could we have known that they were hypocrites, when they appeared outwardly very anxious to keep the law? The people said, "See how these holy men go about and pray on the street corners! Look at their broad phylacteries! We do not see Jesus pray half as much as they pray. And they are always watching, watching, to keep the Law." It was therefore right that our Lord should point out that their watchings, their tithings and their long prayers were hypocritical. They were so very care-

ful about tithing the mint and the anise seed, but had no hesitation about devouring widows' houses—by some technicality getting hold of the property of the needy widow and then swallowing it up themselves.

Jesus declared that on the outside these professedly holy men were indeed ever so white and clean and beautiful, but that on the inside they were vile and unclean. They were of their father the devil; for they had his disposition. They did not do good and serve God from purity of heart; theirs was merely an outward service. Their whole system was honey-combed with hypocrisy—in the language of today we would term it "rotten." It was necessary that these men be exposed, and all who were pure of heart be saved from the blight of their influence. Jesus called out no one of them by name, but merely denounced them as a class. He was not seeking to do them injury, but good, if possible, and to warn them and all of the evil of such a course. Our Lord wished to deliver the people; therefore he spoke these things about a class; he said some very evil things about that class. It would be for each one of the class to clear his own skirts and to show that he was not leading a double life. Our Lord's words, then, would not come under the head of evil-speaking. He was speaking about a system. He was not telling something secret about John Smith, or saying that Mrs. Brown was so-and-so, doing thus-and-so in private life, etc.

So we believe that we have a perfect right to call attention to the flagrant errors of today. It would not be right to reprove in the way our Lord did; for people would resent it more now than did the Jews of his day. If our Lord had not rebuked some of these things that their leaders did, the people would not have known but that those Pharisees had the Lord's endorsement. There they were going about with sanctimonious faces and saying so many prayers, etc. Were they really holy people? Jesus was there as a representative of God and exponent of his views. So Jesus let the people know that these Pharisees were not doing the things pleasing to God. He merely did his duty.

CITY OF DAVID—CITY OF GOD

MAY 30.—2 SAMUEL 6:1-19.—PSALM 24.

JERUSALEM THE NEW CAPITAL—KING DAVID'S PALACE—GOD'S PRESENCE DESIRED—THE ARK TO BE BROUGHT—UZZAH SLAIN—OBED-EDOM BLESSED—THE LESSON LEARNED—THE ARK PROPERLY BROUGHT—SOLEMNITY WITH REJOICING—THE TABERNACLE OF GOD—LESSONS FOR GOD'S PEOPLE.

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the House of Jehovah."—Psalm 122:1.

Guided by divine providence, King David sought a new capital after he had been anointed king over all Israel. The city of Jerusalem had for centuries been an impregnable fortress, held by the Jebusites. They claimed that even the blind and the cripples could defend it against any foe, so advantageously was it situated. But when the time came, it was delivered into the hands of King David and became the capital of Israel. One of the first acts of the new king was to provide himself a palace fitting to the dignity of the nation and the court. To this end he obtained from King Hiram of Tyre not only material, but also skilled craftsmen.

Soon King David's spiritual nature, so marked and represented in his Psalms, began to assert itself in respect to the government of Israel. It was not sufficient that idolatry should not be tolerated amongst God's covenant people. The symbols of God's presence should be honored once more. The Tabernacle at Nob had fallen into disuse when King Saul destroyed the priests because they gave comfort to David; and King Saul had had the Tabernacle removed to Gibeon; but the ark was not in the Tabernacle, and had not been for a long time.

We recall that the wicked sons of Eli had taken the ark with them into the battle with the Philistines; that in the defeat it was captured by the Philistines; that in its presence, Dagon, the Philistine idol, fell down broken; and that in whatever city the ark rested, there were chastisements from the Lord until the Philistines returned it to Kirjath-Jearim. There it had remained for seventy years, until the events now noticed. King David made the transfer of the ark to its new tent, or Tabernacle, a very important affair, sending word to various parts of the nation, assembling some thirty thousand warriors and multitudes of people of deep religious inclination who desired to be witnesses to this great new religious movement, which all hoped would mean the bringing of God's blessing back to the nation, as of old.

A GREAT LESSON IN REVERENCE

King David, intent upon honoring God, had nevertheless neglected to look particularly into the divine law regulating the ark and its movement—who should touch it, etc. Divine

providence now gave him a great lesson in respect to reverence for the Almighty and carefulness in respect to the laws. He had esteemed the ark, but not highly enough. Really, it was the most important of all the various furniture of the Tabernacle.

The brazen altar and the laver were in the Court; the table of shew-bread, which was overlaid with gold, the golden candlestick and the golden altar of incense were in the Holy. But in the Most Holy the only article of furniture was the ark. In shape it was like a box—about four feet long, two feet high, and two feet wide. It had a pole at each side, by which the Levites were to bear it on their shoulders. It was overlaid with gold; and inside the box were the tables of the law, a golden pot of manna, preserved from the Wilderness times, and Aaron's rod, by which miracles had been wrought. The top of the ark was its most peculiar feature. It was a solid plate of gold, wrought out above in the shape of two cherubim, whose faces looked inward and whose wings stretched forward.

The divine direction was that the priests should cover the ark in a particular manner, symbolical of certain things; and that then only the Levites should have the care of it, to bear it upon their shoulders. Neglecting these matters, the king had a new cart made and oxen to draw the cart, as though this would be a more dignified way to bring it than any other thought of. But it was not God's way; and a lesson of reverence for God and for the ark, which symbolized his character and his mercy-seat, must be given.

The appropriate time came when the oxen, drawing the cart over a smooth, sloping, stone surface, allowed it to tilt a little. Then it was that Uzzah stretched forth his hand to steady the ark, and was immediately smitten dead with a bolt of lightning. This evidence of divine displeasure with the procedure brought all the festivities to a sudden termination; and King David feared to bring it too near to him, lest it should do other injury. The procession stopped; turning aside, the ark was delivered to the home of Obed-edom the Levite, possibly a priest.

The whole people thus learned the lesson of reverence—

a lesson, by the way, which seems to be as much needed today as at any time. Irreverence is frequently manifested by the world; but this does not astound us as much as when we find irreverence manifested by those who profess to be the Lord's consecrated people, his royal priesthood. It is sometimes irreverence of manner, sometimes irreverence of language, sometimes the making of jokes on religious things or on passages of Scripture. Everything of the kind is surely injurious to the individual, as well as to his influence with others.

We are not to forget that Uzzah was not sent to eternal torment; but that he merely fell asleep in death, and that his mistake, which taught a good lesson in his time, will not inure to his disadvantage in the future. Meantime, another lesson was taught; for the ark at the home of Obed-edom began to bring blessings, of just what character we are not informed, but blessings of such a nature that they attracted the attention of many. Among them King David noticed. Again his heart turned to the original thought that Jerusalem should be not only the City of David, but the City of God. God's dwelling-place, as represented by the presence of the ark and the Shekinah glory-light which shone between the two cherubim, as indicating the presence of God with his people, Israel.

GOD'S OWN HOLY NATION

We are not situated in the same way as were David and the Israelites. There is no nation in the world today that is God's kingdom. When he took away the crown from Zedekiah, 606 B. C., He declared through the Prophet, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more until he comes whose right it is; and I will give it unto him." (Ezekiel 21:25-27) We believe that the time for the giving of the kingdom to Messiah and the fulfilment of our prayers, "Thy kingdom come," is near at hand. But, in the meantime, no earthly kingdom is God's kingdom except in the sense that St. Peter declares the church to be the holy nation, a peculiar people of God. (1 Peter 2:9) But even then, it is not a sectarian system that is referred to—not the Baptist church, nor the Methodists, nor the Presbyterian, nor the Lutheran, the Anglican or the Roman. The true church of Christ is the unlimited church, to which properly belongs the name Catholic, in the sense that it is general; for that word means general, or universal.

The church of Christ is the one church throughout the whole world; and its members are those who are united to Christ by consecration and by divine acceptance through the begetting of the holy Spirit. Some of its members may be found in the Roman church, some in the Anglican, some in the Presbyterian, some in the Baptist, some in the Lutheran, some in the Methodist and others, and some outside of all these. But this is the only holy nation that God recognizes; and it will not be organized as a new nation fully until the resurrection change shall glorify the Lord's people with himself beyond the veil; as it is written, we shall be like him, shall see him as he is and shall share his glory.

We can no more expect the world to appreciate the truth of God and the presence of God than the Israelites could have expected that the Philistines, on the one hand, and the Moabites, on the other hand, would accept the Lord. Only God's covenant people can appreciate him and his arrangements. He is in their midst only.

Nor can we even claim that it is a family matter; rather, as the Scriptures show, it is an individual matter. Here one, there another, the church of Christ is scattered throughout the world. Only the consecrated belong to it or have its privileges and the fellowship with the Father and with the Son which the ark of the covenant would imply. One exception to this rule might be noted; namely, the one mentioned by St. Paul—the children of believing parents, who are counted in with their parents as participators in God's favors, blessings and care until such time as they reach a development of mind that would enable them to decide for themselves, either to make a full consecration to the Lord and be individually accepted by him through the begetting of the holy Spirit; or to turn aside and be part of the world.

When King David was ready for the bringing up of the ark the second time, some three months after the first attempt, which failed, he had studied the matter more carefully; and this time there was no new cart, but the divinely directed method—the Levites bearing the Ark upon their shoulders. It is not for us to be ingenious and inventive in respect to divine methods and services, but rather to be students of the divine will, searching the Scriptures that we may know the will of God and do it. The lesson which King David learned is one which all of God's people may well take to heart.

DANCING BEFORE THE LORD

The Record tells that, besides the thousands of warriors who acted as a guard and gave dignity to the procession, and the multitudes of people who met the ark at various villages on the way, there were trumpeters, rattlers, and players on stringed instruments, who made joyful manifestations of appreciation of the great event of God's return to the nation as represented in the ark's return. Another arrangement was that of having the Levites chant, one to the other, the different portions of a certain Psalm which King David had composed for this very occasion. It is made a part of this lesson.—Psalm 24.

King David joined with the others in his manifestation of delight, and danced before the Lord. It would appear that this custom of a dignified rhythmic moving of the feet in harmony with music is a common form even today in far Eastern countries. Mr. Clark tells us how there was such a dance at a gathering of the Christian Endeavorers at one of their meetings in India, and how dignified and beautiful it appeared.

As the grand procession neared the city of Jerusalem, it was met by the women of the city with rejoicing. At the head of these should have been Michal, King David's wife, the daughter of King Saul. But not so. She was in a cynical, proud mood. Was she not the daughter of King Saul? Had not her husband David been a poor shepherd boy, and then an outlaw for a time? On his coming home she criticized him for his manifestations of joy in connection with the bringing in of the ark. She said that it was undignified and reproved him. King David reminded her that the Lord had taken the kingdom from her father and given it to him, and that he thus had the Lord's favor and thus relied on him. And the proud woman was apparently thereafter left to herself, the bare mention being made that she was thenceforth childless.

THE PSALM WAS PROPHETIC

As the ark represented Christ, in whom are hidden all the wisdom and power of God and in whom center all of God's blessings for men, so the bringing of the ark into the city corresponded in a measure to our receiving of Christ. All such realize that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof"—that every good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father and through the Son. The world and all that dwell therein are subjects of these blessings.

God is founding his new order of things in the midst of seas of discontent—amongst those who are not established and in harmony with God—the restless masses. He invites us to ascend into his holy hill, his holy kingdom, and to be established in his holy place, in the spiritual divine nature. He stipulates that none can be of this class except upon certain conditions; namely, a pure heart, an honest heart, and clean hands, righteous living to the best of his ability. These are all expected to swear allegiance to God. This is styled their covenant with him.

Jesus was the first of these covenanters; and all of the church must walk in his steps, if they would be with him in his holy kingdom. These must not lift up their soul to falsehood nor swear deceitfully. God will require of them all that they have covenanted with him. Only such will receive the blessing of the Lord, and only to such will his righteousness be imputed through Christ.

Never more than today has this lesson seemed to need to be impressed. How many today confess that although they have made a covenant of sacrifice and vowed to the Lord, they are not considering this nor keeping their vows! How many indeed confess that they are speaking falsely in respect to their creeds, denying privately what they publicly have declared to be their faith! Surely such a course must be reprehensible in God's sight and such cannot hope to be of the kingdom.

Then follows in the Psalm a declaration that the Children of Israel are those who seek the Lord, and who request that the King of Glory come in, even the Lord, mighty, powerful, able to deliver from sin and from the power of sin—death. We are still waiting for the entrance of this King of Glory in the full sense of the word. He declares that he will be revealed in flaming fire, so far as the world is concerned—a great "time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation." (Daniel 12:1) Many Bible students see this trouble already beginning in the awful war now spreading, and are expecting the fiery anarchy of it to result in the near future. Then quickly will come the still small voice, the divine influence, the mighty power of the Savior, which will deliver from sin, from death, and from Satan, who shall be bound for a thousand years.

"IN PASTURES GREEN?"

[Reprint of poem published in issue of June 1, 1913, which please see.]

"THOU ART THE MAN!"

JUNE 6.—2 SAMUEL 11:1 TO 12:7.

THE HONESTY OF THE BIBLE—KING DAVID'S STATION DID NOT COVER HIS GUILT—THE TEMPTATIONS OF PROSPERITY—KING DAVID'S TERRIBLE SINS—THE PROPHET NATHAN'S PARABLE—THE KING'S SENSE OF JUSTICE—CONDEMNED BY HIS OWN WORD—HIS PENITENCE—FORGIVEN YET PUNISHED—THE LESSON TO ALL.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God."—Psalm 51:10.

The Bible is unlike any other book in the world. It is the most honest, the most candid, of all books. The one most approved as a man after God's own heart is, when he sins, most severely condemned and heavily punished. There is a lesson, however, in the Scriptural statement, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mightest be feared." (Psalm 130:4) The fact that he gives us credit for our heart intentions, even when the weaknesses of the flesh are reproved and punished—these indications of consideration prompt to the greater reverence for God than if we merely thought of him as merciless.

No wonder we are surprised that one who manifested so many noble traits should also have manifested such weaknesses as those condemned in this lesson—adultery and murder! We think of David the youth, his reverence for God, his faith, his loyalty, his trials, his difficulties; and we wonder how he could become so changed in so short a time. The secret is not far to seek. It is easier to live a wholly consecrated life in poverty than when surrounded by wealth and the pleasures, customs and liberties of the court. The king temporarily forgot that the ark, representative of God's favor and presence, was now in his city. He realized indeed that the eyes of the Lord were in every place beholding the evil and the good; yet the seeing of the Tabernacle should have brought freshly to his mind the thought, "Thou God seest me."

We may be sure, however, that King David did not get into so sinful a condition of mind and heart suddenly. The narrative shows that the matter must have gone on for months, gradually reaching a culmination. Nor would it be fair to the king to assume that his heart was as wrong as his conduct. Rather we must assume, from subsequent manifestations, that his heart was still loyal to God and to the principles of righteousness, but somehow his heart had gone to sleep and his flesh had become very much alive. He was awake to sin, asleep to righteousness. He had before him the unfavorable examples of other kings and the liberties which they exercised. His relationship with God had made him keen of intellect; and now, in yielding to temptation, this keenness of mind was all the more effective in the evil course.

A COURAGEOUS SERVANT OF GOD

David first coveted his neighbor's wife. He did not rebuke this sinful condition of mind, but allowed it to proceed until he stole his neighbor's wife. Her husband was in the war, a faithful soldier. The emergency seemed to call for his death in order to protect the king from shame. David's conscience was surely asleep when he ordered his general to put the faithful soldier in an exposed place in the attack being made on a certain city, then to command a retreat and thus leave the most exposed ones to be killed.

The plan carried out. It cost the life of not only the defrauded husband, but several others. We can scarcely imagine how one of King David's loyalty to principle could have arranged such a plan or how he could have had any peace under these circumstances. Surely none of his beautiful Psalms were written during those nine months or more. But Uriah was dead; and his stolen wife had been made the wife of David, and shortly their child was born.

Then appeared the Prophet Nathan before the king. Wisely bringing his reproof in the form of a parable, he told of a poor man who had but one ewe lamb and of how a wealthy neighbor had defrauded him of it. King David's sense of justice was outraged, and he declared that the man who did that deed must restore four-fold and must also be put to death. Then the Lord's Prophet Nathan pointing to the king, declared, "Thou art the man!" and promptly drove home the lesson. It required courage; but whoever has a message from the Lord must needs have the courage to deliver it—as wisely as possible, of course, but faithfully.

Instantly King David's heart was aroused; immediately his conscience was quickened. He saw his own conduct, not from the standpoint of other kings and what they did, but from the standpoint of the divine law of righteousness, truth, kindness, mercy. He beheld himself a sinner. Indeed, under the law, both the adultery and the murder were punishable by death. The king instantly acknowledged his sin, and prayed, fasted and mourned. Meanwhile the Prophet, by divine direction, informed the king that for all this the Lord would not cause his death nor take from him all his loving-kindness, because he had confessed and repented; but that, nevertheless, the child of his sin should not live and the king himself would in after time suffer severe punishments for his transgressions.

Here we perceive a principle of the divine government in respect to those who are the people of God and are in covenant relationship with him. Justice would have been required in respect to the sins; but to the repentant soul the Lord's favor would, nevertheless, still be granted. Many Christians have had experience along this line. God does not continue to treat them as sinners; but, accepting their heart contrition, he forgives them in that sense of the word; yet true to his arrangement, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." In this divine arrangement there is nothing to encourage sin, but, on the contrary, everything to encourage righteousness; and if sin be fallen into, everything to encourage the sinner to accept divine forgiveness and to reform his life, even though he shall be obliged to bear some severe penalty—perhaps to his tomb.

THE PSALM OF REPENTANCE

Very many Christians have been encouraged to repentance by the Fifty-first Psalm. Surely none have been encouraged by it to sin. It is said that Voltaire, the infidel, once attempted a burlesque of this Psalm, but became so awed by its solemn tone that he threw down the pen and fell back dazed on his couch, full of remorse. Bishop Hall, commenting, says, "How can we presume of not sinning, or despair for sinning, when we find so great a saint thus fallen, thus risen?" We should remember, however, that noble as King David was, he was not a saint in the New Testament sense of that word. He may have been equally saintly in heart intentions, but he had not been accepted of the Lord and begotten of the holy Spirit; for "the holy Spirit was not yet given," as we read in John 7:39.

The giving of the holy Spirit and its begetting to a new nature began at Pentecost, and has continued since. If we are astonished that King David should be overtaken in such faults, how much more would we be astonished if any saint of God, begotten of the holy Spirit, should fall into such a trap of the adversary. The spirit-begotten ones have much advantage every way—not only through the greater enlightenment which comes to them through the better knowledge of the divine character, the divine plan and the divine promises, but also by reason of having the Lord Jesus as their helper under the assurance that "All things shall work together for good to them" (Romans 8:28); and that the Lord will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able; but will with every temptation also provide a way of escape.—I Corinthians 10:13.

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me." These words of honesty assure us that the king was overtaken in some kind of fog which for months obscured his mental vision. Earth-born clouds and fleshly weaknesses arose like a veil between his soul and the Lord, shutting out the light of the Lord's countenance.

The lesson applies to all who have ever been in covenant relationship with God. The poet has expressed what ought to be the sentiment of every Christian, discerning the slightest shadow between the Lord and himself.

"Sun of my soul, my Father dear,

I know no night when thou art near.

Oh, may no earth-born cloud arise

To hide thee from thy servant's eyes!"

The important lesson here is that we shall keep close accounts with God. No child of God should go forth in the morning without an earnest petition to him for divine supervision of his affairs and for help to walk the right path. No child of God should retire at night without a retrospective glance on all the day's pathway, to discern to what extent it has been a profitable one and has brought him a day's march nearer the heavenly home. Or, perchance something has occurred of which he should feel ashamed, it is none too soon to go at once to the throne of heavenly grace to obtain mercy and find fresh help for future times of need.

The child of God thus keeping daily accounts with the Father and with the Redeemer, will abide in Their love and not be in danger of falling into any such great sin as these noted in this lesson. Even King David, we may be sure, would have fallen into no such sins had he not allowed gradually to arise earth-born clouds of fleshly hues between the Lord and himself.

"Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

Although the holy Spirit was not given to the ancient wor-

thies in the same sense that it is given to the church, it was nevertheless the manifestation of God's favor toward them in their affairs, as the king here intimates. We are to remember that from Moses down to John the Baptist, according to the Scriptures, there was a house of servants under Moses; but that during this Gospel age there is a house of sons, begotten of the holy Spirit, under the chief Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.—Hebrews 3:5, 6.

CO-LABORING WITH OUR GOD

Too often do God's people forget that the Lord himself is at the head of his work. Too often the thought is, We will do a work and get God to co-labor with us in our work. Let us get the right focus on the matter, and perceive that God has purposed and is carrying out a great work; and that it will succeed, entire regardless of us and our effort; and that it is a great privilege granted to the people of God to co-labor with their Maker in the carrying out of his plans, his designs, his arrangements, in his way. Viewing matters from this standpoint, our prayer and our watching should be with a view to knowing and doing the will of the Lord, content whatever lot we see, since 'tis our God who leads us.

This is the program which the WATCH TOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY has sought to follow. Its officers are seeking to do the will of the Father as guided by the teachings of the Head of the church, Christ Jesus and his appointed representatives, the twelve apostles, whose words we have for our instruction today in better form than ever before. Following this program, our Society has not sought to lay up earthly riches, but has been, rather, a spending institution. Whatever God's providence sent in to us without solicitation we have sought to spend as wisely as possible in harmony with the Word and Spirit of the Lord. Long ago we announced that when the funds would cease, the activities of the Society would cease proportionately; and that as the funds increased, the Society's activities would be enlarged.

This program has been greatly blessed of the Lord and, we believe, is in full accord with his will. We have no thought of changing it in any degree. Last year was the most wonderful one in our experience. The Gospel message by printed page and orally and by the DRAMA witnessed the Gospel of the kingdom nigh at hand to millions of people all over the earth. We thank God for the blessed privileges enjoyed and the activities permitted in his service on behalf of thousands of his consecrated people in every land, co-laboring with the Society and laboring either directly or indirectly under its auspices.

When making our last Annual Report, we expressed the thought that many of the Lord's people have already invested what money they possessed, and that we would thus expect donations to be smaller than heretofore and that we would be obliged to discontinue some of the DRAMAS. Later we announced bright prospects of a full resumption. We did not tell the basis of this expectation, but will now explain:

Some Brethren informed us that they believed they were possessed of a rich gold-bearing property, that all of its proceeds were consecrated to the Lord's service, that ere long we might expect money from them in good supply, but that their names were to be kept secret. Their expectations, which were highly appreciated, were not realized. The expectation had a beneficial effect, however, in that it encouraged us to keep the work up to a high notch of speed and efficiency in every direction until the present time. Now we have gone our limit. We must conclude that it is the Lord's will that our activities be greatly curtailed, in order to bring down the expenses to a parity with the income.

SEVENTY SENT FORTH

In line with this decision, seventy of the dear helpers at the Society's headquarters have been obliged to go forth to seek other avenues of usefulness in the work. Some will become colporteurs; others will accept situations as teachers in schools and colleges; some will enter business life. All will, we believe, however, still continue to put God first and to consider the spread of the Gospel of the kingdom their main business of life, giving evenings, Sundays, etc., to the service, as may be possible.

The necessary retrenchments include the putting of the DRAMAS on a self-supporting basis—or else discontinuing them. Our Society can continue to supply films and slides for these DRAMAS, and the Office direction, but must look to the superintendents and operators of each DRAMA to meet their own expenses. This is being done by offering the DRAMA to theatre managers as part of their regular program, to be charged for, but not at an extra charge. The new plan is being put into operation and is proving successful generally. Indeed, some

people declare that they would much prefer to pay an admission fee than to attend the DRAMA free, because they feared that at a free entertainment they would be brought in contact with the rude and uncleanly. It is a remarkable fact, however, that our free entertainments have been generally attended by a splendid class of people from the middle walks of life. Furthermore, to adapt the DRAMA to the use of the theatre managers we have arranged that the FOUR PARTS can be given in full as now, two hours each; or, if the theatre managers prefer, we will supply the four entertainments of about one hour each by omitting some of the slides and lectures, leaving the audience to get the remainder of the DRAMA by the reading of the Scenario. It may be that in this way the Lord will use the DRAMA in reaching a still different class from that already reached by its free exhibition.

The free volunteer matter, which last year ran up to the enormous amount of forty-seven millions of copies, must also be cut down. Some of our readers have orders placed; and this will be the explanation if your orders are not filled entirely. In a word, the retrenchment will extend all along the line, including a reduction in the expense allowances of the Bethel family and curtailment of expense for food supplies. Our readers will be glad to know that the entire family is rejoicing in the privilege of further self-denials for the cause we love to serve, and that the seventy who have gone forth, some of them with tears, also manifest fullest resignation to the divine will, rejoicing in the various steps of divine providence and continuing steadfast in prayer, faith and love toward the Lord and the brethren. All are seeking to receive the experiences of life as the polishing preparatory for the kingdom. So receiving them, the blessing of the Lord is more and more manifest amongst us.

We have made this statement with greater detail than might seem necessary, lest there should be wrong impressions and misunderstandings of any kind.

OUR GENERAL LETTER

To Seventy Brothers and Sisters of the Bethel Family:
Greetings!

Sorrow mingles with our joy to do the Father's will and to follow the guidance of his providence, because it signifies a temporary parting from so considerable a number of those whom we dearly love and whose association with the work we highly prize. At the opening of the year we thought that we saw a bright ray of financial hope, notwithstanding the fact that the dear friends throughout the world who had been contributing to the Tract Fund to support the work had well drained themselves of means and could not be expected to continue their donations as formerly. Month by month we have waited and maintained the work, expecting some realization of our hopes; but after five months the drain is so heavy that prompt action is necessary. We must not involve ourselves in debt nor jeopardize the work in general; hence the decision for the reduction of the expenses along every line, including the home expenses, office expenses, etc.

Financially we know that some of you will be benefited by the change. We can surmise also that some will experience benefit to their health by a change of employment. We assume that some of you thus leaving the Bethel and the Tabernacle will be entering the colporteur work. The weather is delightful now, and in places where money is not too scarce good success is obtainable.

In any event, dear Brethren and Sisters, we commend you to the Lord and to his watch-care, blessing and guidance, assured that all things are working together for good to those that love him. He may have some new experiences for us—trials and blessings. He may have some new opportunities for us and may guide us in the reaching of others in this gleaning time. We assure you that we are loth to part with you and that, should the financial stringency be relieved, it will be our pleasure to again expand the work, according to the leading of the Lord's providence.

So far as possible, we would like this retrenchment to take place at once—before the middle of this month, or at least be-

fore the first of June. We ask your hearty and cordial co-operation, and request that you remember in prayer those who are charged with the responsibilities of the Society's work, that wisdom and grace may be theirs in abundance.

While we have suggested that the work may a little later on be expanded, we should also add that it may quite as probably be still further contracted to effect a further reduction in the general expenses. Whatever is the Lord's will surely is our will. Let us show him our faith, our confidence, our loyalty and our obedience.

The selection of names of those who might be spared from the work was no easy task to the heads of the departments charged with this responsibility. Like all human work it may be imperfect; but we are sure that it is done with an eye single to the Lord's pleasure, and we trust that he will overrule it to his praise and for the good of all concerned.

With much Christian love,

Your brother and servant in the Lord,

C. T. RUSSELL.

LOVING RESPONSE

To Our Beloved Pastor, from the Departing Seventy Members of "The Bethel Family":

As we go forth from the hallowed precincts of the "Bethel Home"—hallowed by the remembrance of the many seasons of sweet communion with those whom the Heavenly Father has specially honored in placing in the fore-front of his mighty work in these closing days of this present world's history—it is with a feeling of joy and thankfulness for the many blessings and privileges which have been ours as members of the "Bethel Family."

As we reflect upon the Lord's abounding grace so freely and richly bestowed upon us as members of this household, and as we face the future with its prospects of Heavenly honors and

glories, awaiting us—those who shall be accounted "conquerors, and more than conquerors"—there is, nevertheless, a tinge of sadness in parting with many loved ones, and in leaving all we have called "Home."

Ah, well! we shall remember the kind and loving ministrations of yourself, dear Brother Russell, in the days to come, when separated from one another, we shall fight on in the good fight of faith.

It is the prayer of our hearts that the splendid example of Christian fortitude and self-sacrificing devotion in the service of the Lord, the truth, and the brethren that you have shown, may ever be a cherished and shining image upon memory's scroll.

If ever a true and devoted servant of the Lord should be loved and honored for his work's sake, we believe it is yourself. When we think of the days and night of years of toil, and pain, and weariness; and of the grandeur and world-wide scope of your services; how can we help but love and honor you!

We give thanks to our heavenly Father for having raised up one who has been so wise and faithful in ministering to the household of faith and to us in particular who have been of the "Bethel" household.

And now, our dear Pastor, with these expressions of love and appreciation, we go forth with the prayer for divine guidance upon you, and upon our way that in the Lord's appointed time our journey's end shall be the Father's house of many mansions—the heavenly Bethel—prepared for the bride, the Lamb's wife.

God bless you and the dear remaining members of the "Bethel Family"!

Signed,

C. J. Woodworth,

F. F. Cook,

R. G. Jolly and the others.

INTERESTING QUESTION

"HE WENT TO HIS OWN PLACE"

Question.—I notice an article in THE WATCH TOWER which says that Judas died the second death. Can a man die the second death until he has passed from death unto life, until he has been spirit-begotten, until he has once been in Christ Jesus and free from condemnation?

Answer.—Judas and all the other apostles occupied a peculiar place or position, different from other Jews of their time, because they were in contact with our Lord Jesus, the Great Light. They saw that Light, and were responsible in proportion as they saw it. For any of them to sin as Judas did against that Light, would be a very reprehensible thing. True, Judas had not been begotten again of the holy Spirit; for spirit-begetting was not possible until Pentecost. But this does not prove that he could not die the second death. On the contrary, we know that during the Millennial age there will be some who will not receive the begetting of the holy Spirit, but who will die the second death—the death that will be destruction. Their responsibility will lie in the fact that they will be brought to a knowledge of the truth, with the opportunities which it will give them of coming into full harmony with the Lord. If they respond to those opportunities, they may attain everlasting life; if they do not respond, they will die the second death.

Such an opportunity was given to Judas. For a long time he responded favorably; but afterwards he rejected the blessings that were his portion, and ignominiously proved himself a traitor to the one who was his benefactor. Jesus was to be the judge in the matter; and we have his words calling Judas the "son of perdition." (John 17:12) He said that it would have been better for that man if he had never been born. (Matthew 26:24) This would not be true if Judas were to have an opportunity during the Millennial age. The Scriptures say that he went to his own place. (Acts 1:25) His own place was not heaven; for it was not open to anybody yet; his own place was not restitution, for that has not yet come. His own place was the only place then open—the second death.

PRESENT STANDING OF THE CHURCH

The ransom-price, the ransom-sacrifice of Jesus, has not yet even been paid over, or applied, for the whole world of mankind. If it were, the whole world, redeemed by that payment, would be in his hands. The world has not yet been in our Lord's hands. The time, however, we believe is near when through the strength of that sacrifice, he will ask the Father, and the Father will give him "the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession." (Psalm 2:8) That will be the time when he shall have paid over the ransom-price. He laid down the ransom-price when he died,

but did not apply it. The world is still under condemnation. Only the church has escaped that condemnation thus far.

The church escapes from that condition of condemnation by the imputation of the benefits of that ransom which is not yet paid over. If the church could have the merit of Christ imputed to her down through the Gospel age since Pentecost, the same merit, we believe, could be imputed before Pentecost; for our Lord had made the consecration of himself, and, so far as the type goes, he had already slain the bullock. That is, the consecration of our Lord at Jordan represented the killing of the bullock in the Atonement day type; it was the giving up of his earthly life. This was done when he was thirty years of age, before he had called these disciples. It was then that the Father recognized and accepted his sacrifice, for he gave our Lord the begetting of the holy Spirit. If that sacrifice had not been accepted then the Father would not have begotten him of the Spirit.

THE APOSTLES' STANDING DURING OUR LORD'S MINISTRY

The holy Spirit was given as an evidence that what Jesus had given to the Father was accepted. What he did at Calvary was merely the finishing of that work which he began at Jordan. Our Lord treats the matter from this standpoint, and in discoursing with his disciples tells them that they might pray to God as their Father. No Jew had ever done this before. The Jews thought that Jesus' claim to be the Son of God was blasphemy, and took up stones to stone him because of this. (John 10:31-33) Whoever said, "Our Father," was making himself to be a son of God. No Jew, so far as we have any record throughout the Scriptures, ever made use of such expressions; they were a house of servants.

Then again, Jesus addressed his followers, his disciples, as though they had been accepted of the Father. He was the Father's agent, and he received them in harmony with the Father's arrangement. He declared that "No man cometh unto me except the Father draw him"; and, "No man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." He made these statements before they had received the holy Spirit at Pentecost. This was treating them as though they had the full initiation into the divine family. Our Lord declared that "he that believeth in me hath everlasting life." (John 6:47) All these disciples had believed on the Son. As long as they would hold him in the Scriptural manner—hold to him by faith, according to the terms of this Gospel age, faith and consecration—they might count that they had the life promised to his faithful followers. If any would abandon him, as Judas did, of course he would pass back again from the imputed life to the death condition.

REJECTION OF KNOWLEDGE A SERIOUS MATTER

Judas was a new creature in the reckoned, or imputed,

sense of the word in which all the disciples were said to have passed from death unto life. It was to the new life that they had passed, not to restitution life; for the Lord said to these same disciples that they who had followed him would sit upon twelve thrones (Matthew 19:28), thereby implying that they had passed to that life which would be the condition of the enthroned. Speaking of them, then, from the standpoint of the new creation, this was possible because in our Lord's contract unto death, which he entered into by baptism, he really gave up all of his earthly rights. It was possible in the tentative form, the Father purposing that not many days after Jesus'

ascension they would be endued with power from on High.—Luke 24:49.

Hebrews 6:4-8 does indeed refer to the church, but it does not enumerate the only conditions of which any will die the second death. All of the church are liable to this condemnation. If they would sin wilfully, if they would fall away so as to deny the very foundation of God's favor—the ransom-sacrifice of Jesus—they would die the second death. This Scripture does not say that there are no other conditions on which the second death will be inflicted. We see that the second death will be inflicted on some in the Millennial age.

“CONSIDER HIM”—THEN FOLLOW

“Consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”—Hebrews 12:3.

The Apostle had just been pointing out the faithfulness of our Lord Jesus. He had reminded the church of the shame and ignominy which the Master had endured for the great joy set before him by the Heavenly Father. He declares Jesus to be the Author and Finisher of our faith. He then urges that in our trials and difficulties as children of God we remember what extreme experiences in suffering the Master endured—such contradiction, such opposition, of sinners against himself—opposition to his doctrines, to everything that he did. This opposition to Jesus continued until it resulted in his murder.

The Apostle says to the church, “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin,” as Jesus did. As a matter of fact, we really suffer very little and give up very little. At most we have but little life, as members of the fallen race, and it stretches out for only a brief span. We have very little to consecrate to God. And when that little is going we should consider how insignificant it is, and what great things the Master had—not merely the perfection that he had in his earthly

life, but also what he had previously, and how, in obedience to the divine will, he humbled himself and left his glory to become a man—and then humbled himself still further, unto death, “even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted [raised to the highest position—Strong] him, and given him a name which is above every name.”

We should be glad to walk in his footsteps, to endure the same experiences, to drink whatever the Father shall pour out for us in our cup—his cup. As we consider thus our dear Master's experiences and faithfulness, it makes our experiences seem only light afflictions, but for a moment, and working out “for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:17, 18) For let us remember that we are “called . . . to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast.”—2 Thessalonians 2:14, 15.

THE RUTHERFORD-TROY DEBATE

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL:—

The debates are past history now—ending last evening. Every night the auditorium was packed, with probably more turned away than got in. The total attendance was approximately 12,000 persons. Except for the great amount of enthusiasm manifested by the audience everything was very orderly, and a good spirit prevailed throughout. Certainly the Lord's favor was with us, and the prayers of the many friends were answered. Many messages of encouragement came from different parts of the country, among them two cablegrams from Europe. The friends are all happy. This morning (Sunday) I spoke to the friends for 30 minutes at The Temple, and this was followed by a testimony meeting for one hour. It would have done your heart good to see the joy manifested by the friends, and to hear the many expressions of love for all. If the debates have accomplished no other good, I feel sure they have greatly strengthened the saints here, many testifying that the striking contrast between truth and error has given them new zeal for service.

I must tell you how the adversary did not succeed for once. My opponent was well prepared to assault you personally. I judged so from the interviews he had given the press two days before the debate. I said nothing then, but waited my time. About three minutes before we went on the platform for the first night's discussion I called Brother Troy, my opponent, and two of his friends and two of our friends into a side room. You will recall that we had entered into a thousand-dollar obligation, with securities, that we would refrain from personalities. I then said: “Brother Troy, I desire to be absolutely frank with you and therefore I say this to you before we go on the platform. From your interviews with the press I judge that you intend to assault Pastor Russell from the platform. Of course, you can pursue that course if you wish, but the first time you attempt it I am going to have your bond forfeited.”

His reply was, “May I not mention his name?” “No,” I said, “not one time. I signed this agreement with you to discuss the Bible, and by that contract I am going to abide, and I shall expect you to do the same.” He said, “All right; I am ready.” We went on the platform. Not once did he mention your name throughout the four nights, but it was an awfully bitter pill for him to refrain therefrom. Having prepared along that line and being taken down so suddenly he was much disturbed and labored under much stress, as I could observe, during his first argument. I am confident the Lord directed this matter, and thus saved the debate from being an occasion for personal assault upon you.

When the debate closed last night many persons came to

me, quite a number saying, “I have been a Baptist for years, but I have had my eyes opened here. You have brought me the light”; and similar expressions.

Quite a large number of cards were turned in on each night. I have not the total here just now. I received a real blessing in the whole matter and am indeed grateful to the Lord that he has been pleased to give me this opportunity to bear witness to his great plan.

This (Sunday) afternoon at the Shrine Auditorium we had a very good public meeting. The friends say there were about 3500 in attendance, 992 of whom turned in their addresses. This afternoon my subject was, “Babylon Before the Great Court”; and I took occasion to tell the people about the assaults the ministers were making against you personally. Several preachers were in the audience, and I stated that I would be glad to furnish a printed reply to each one of such charges. Sorry we did not have the booklet ready, but we will get it to many here when it does arrive. I hope that by the time you come the people will be more anxious to hear you than ever before. I think there are still some of the Lord's people in this place.

I must take this occasion to say that the success of the publicity for the debates and meetings following here is due to the untiring and faithful work of our dear Brother Page Noll. He made himself very agreeable to the reporters “covering” the debates, and they were favorable to us in every way they could be. A full report of each day's debate was published by the *Express* and the *Tribune*, and I am advised that about 75,000 extra copies were mailed out each day by the newspaper company to various parts of the world. The paper printed cards and distributed them all over the city, calling the attention of the people to the fact that verbatim copies of the debate would be in certain issues of the paper; and doubtless this sold many papers. Brother Noll had gone after the matter in a systematic manner, and the Lord surely blessed his efforts and his faithfulness. If a copy of the debates comes to your notice you will see that more space is given to my argument than to my opponent's. That is due to the fact that I spoke with much more rapidity than did my opponent. Profiting by your experience at Cincinnati, I crowded in all that I could.

I enclose a clipping from one of the morning papers, wherein you will see that at yesterday's meeting I spoke of the booklet I am getting out answering the slanderous charges against you. Quite a number are anxious to have these pamphlets, and I hope they may be ready soon.

Never before have I realized so fully the blessed privilege the Lord's dear children have of praying for each other. I am