

(8) If both the seeds are brought forth under the Sarah Covenant then how about Gal. 3:16, where it speaks of THE seed which is Christ?

The Christ is the Seed, but the "promise" is "sure to both."—Rom. 4:16.

(8) Are those now called to membership in The Christ justified by the sacrifice of the man Christ Jesus?

Most assuredly, "By faith in his blood." Faith in the New Covenant justifies nobody. Those blessed under the New Covenant will be justified by works.—Rev. 20:13.

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THE OPENING AT BROOKLYN

The friends at places where one-day conventions are held are pleased if they be reported in the WATCH TOWER, and we would be pleased to report them were it not that there is always such a sameness unavoidably connected with them. Almost without exception it could be said that the dear friends put forth strenuous efforts to bring the public service to the attention of the people, and that they succeed admirably, and that large and intelligent audiences are secured, and in many cases large numbers are unable to gain admittance. This sameness of the reports and our limited space alone hinder these reports. Nevertheless, if assured by many that they are appreciated and desired, we would take up the matter afresh.

The opening of the Brooklyn Tabernacle on January 31st and the subsequent work in that city, we are assured, would be of deep interest to the friends in general, and hence the present report.

The opening day, appointed a month in advance, found us none too well prepared. Our stationary chairs had not yet been placed and many of the finishing touches were lacking. However, we had a very enjoyable day.

The auditorium is on the second floor and has a seating capacity of over 800, but is conveniently arranged so that the curtains can be drawn, shutting off more than one-third of the seats. The Tabernacle is well lighted from the roof, and the side-walls are embellished with some of the gracious promises of our Father's Word in artistic workmanship and soft colors. The prevalent color of the walls, floor, etc., is olive green. The conditions altogether are very restful, and those who arrive before the meetings commence will find excellent food for quiet meditation.

The floor below this, the street floor, is being fitted up for our office purposes, and the basement floor for our stock and shipping departments.

The total number of the friends of the immediate vicinity, New York, Brooklyn, Jersey City, Newark, etc., in attendance, numbered about 200; probably another 100 or more came from surrounding towns, and 27 from as far away as Boston. All seemed well pleased with the move which the Lord's providence seemed to direct, and pleased, also, with the building chosen and the repairs made.

The eleven o'clock praise and testimony service was participated in by about 350, and was very enjoyable; the testimonials to the Lord's grace, and goodness, and care caused our hearts to overflow with gratitude. The afternoon meeting had been advertised to the public, and the attendance was very good. Close attention was given and we have hoped that some interest was aroused. In the evening we had a question meeting, and the character of the questions indicated intelligence and studiousness on the part of the dear friends.

The following Sunday very nearly the same programme was carried out, but with less advertising. The afternoon meeting was not so large. The friends of the New York City congregation, those of Brooklyn and those of Jersey City, all voted their unanimous desire to be parts of the Ecclesia whose home will be at the "Brooklyn Tabernacle," and unanimously elected Brother C. T. Russell Pastor of the same.

The following Sunday, February 14th, Brother Brenneisen spoke in the afternoon, and in the evening conducted a Berean Bible study. The attendance was all that could be expected.

A special arrangement was made to meet the public on February 21st. The Brooklyn Academy of Music was secured for the afternoon, and the friends of Greater New York and vicinity certainly did manifest great zeal in the advertising of the meeting. The dear friends got out 150,000 copies of the first number of the new paper, "People's Pulpit," on the back of which was an advertisement of the Academy meeting. Window cards were used also, and posters, so that the meeting became widely advertised. The result was better than any of us had dared to anticipate. The house was crowded, seating 2200; approximately 400 stood, and it is estimated that more than 2500 people were turned away, unable to gain admission. To this overflow, however, the ushers distributed a special number of the WATCH TOWER so that we may hope that even they received some blessing. The large audience gave close attention for nearly two hours, and took the literature at the door with considerable manifestation of interest. How many grains of

"wheat" were there and how many of these were favorable to influence, the Lord only knows, but we were pleased at the favorable hearing and the interest manifested upon the faces of the audience, which was a very intelligent one.

At the close of the session, Brother Rutherford was announced to speak at "Brooklyn Tabernacle" on the following Sunday afternoon on the "Divine Plan of the Ages" from a Lawyer's standpoint. A large house of earnest hearers greeted him.

Incidentally, we might mention another one-day convention recently held in Cleveland, a public service which was very remarkable, in respect to the congregation and the interest shown. The Cleveland friends, very full of zeal, engaged their largest auditorium, "The Hippodrome," which is one of the largest in the country, with a seating capacity of 4600. How thoroughly and wisely the dear friends exercised themselves in the advertising of that meeting may be judged from the fact that the house was full and many were standing, while about 600 were turned away by order of the Public Safety Department.

These large attendances must not mislead any of us into supposing that the truth is becoming popular. Our readers well know that such is not our expectation, although we are expecting that the next two years especially will see wonderful things accomplished in the spread of the truth. Of course, the majority attending these meetings come from curiosity, but when we remember that we not only do not have the assistance of our Christian friends of the various denominations, but in many instances have their open, and especially their secret, opposition, the lesson is that religious people are doing more thinking for themselves than ever before, and it is in this class that we may hope to find a considerable amount of "wheat," some for the "little flock" and more for the "great company."

In this connection, we believe that it will be of interest to nearly all of our readers that we mention some of the Lord's providences in connection with the locating of the Bible House family in Brooklyn. The Tabernacle has no living apartments connected with it, and when we sought to rent a suitable building for the housing of our family of more than thirty, we found that we had a difficult problem. We almost needed a hotel. While the Tabernacle is not in an aristocratic neighborhood, the residence district near it is of a good class with fine, large residences. Some of these are for sale, but none for rent. We thought of going a little distance and finding cheaper quarters, and then reflected that the car-fare to and from the office twice daily would amount to \$1800 a year, and besides we would have inconvenience and loss of time.

At an opportune time some friends of the truth proposed that we purchase such property as would suit our convenience, put it into repair, and that they would furnish the money—we to hold the title and they to take a mortgage for the amount expended, on which they asked but five per cent. interest, and intimated that some of the interest might find its way into the Tract Fund from time to time. This proposal seemed providential and was gladly accepted as the cheapest and best thing possible. We anticipate that the interest will not amount to more than two-thirds of the car-fare estimate, possibly less.

Thus prepared, we made a fresh examination of the district with a view to purchase, and finally made bids upon three properties suitable to our uses with some alterations. We are sure that we will surprise you when we state that the one of the three which came to us at a bargain price is what is known as "The Old Henry Ward Beecher Home." It certainly seems very remarkable that we should get the old Beecher Bethel and then by accident get his former residence. Considerable repairs are necessary, and are being made, but when completed our large family could scarcely be better fixed for the few remaining years of activity which we expect. The new home we shall call "Bethel," and the new office and auditorium, "The Brooklyn Tabernacle"; these names will supplant the term "Bible House."

Some day we may have a convention in Brooklyn, when we shall have an opportunity of greeting many of our dear readers at one or both of these new locations. We solicit your prayers on behalf of the work and the workers at these new establishments, that with humility of heart and word and conduct, our enlarged opportunities for service may result in the glory of God and in the blessing of others and our own spiritual development in the fruits and graces of the holy Spirit.

SUBSCRIPTIONS TO "PEOPLE'S PULPIT"

PEOPLE'S PULPIT is the title of a small new paper proposed to be published monthly, if the Postoffice authorities will grant it Second-Class mail privileges.

We proposed to send PEOPLE'S PULPIT to fill out the year of "Old Theology Quarterly," but that was found inexpedient, so the latter filled out its own subscriptions. We have, however, arranged to have sample copies of the new paper, PEOPLE'S PULPIT, sent to our entire list—the first issue. This will serve as a sample and you can determine whether you wish to subscribe for it or not.

It will contain chiefly Brother Russell's sermons, which many of you already have through other newspapers. Its value, therefore, would chiefly be for friends and neighbors.

The new postal regulations are very strict, so that subscrip-

tions for PEOPLE'S PULPIT must be made in quite positive terms. Cash must accompany each order or else a promise to pay or a request to have your subscription paid for you from the Society's funds. If, however, you are a Tract Fund contributor, you can so state and direct that the payment be made out of your donation. Or you can order for others on your donation account. Address orders to PEOPLE'S PULPIT, enclosed with letters to us, if more convenient.

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PROPOSED CONVENTIONS DURING 1909

Last year we concentrated our efforts and had one general convention at Put-in-Bay. It was both enjoyable and profitable and served some better than any other arrangement. For the present year, however, it has been deemed best to pursue a different course—to have a number of conventions in various parts. The advantage in so doing will accrue chiefly to those residing far apart and to whom a general convention would be too expensive, both as to time and money.

In pursuance of this plan we have already had the Nashville, Tenn., and the Jacksonville, Fla., mid-winter conventions. That the friends may be able to order their affairs to the best advantage, an early announcement of the convention arrangements for 1909 is requested and stated below. In it we have sought the greatest good for the greatest number.

EUROPEAN CONVENTION TOUR

Unable last year to spare the time for even a brief visit to the friends of Germany and Scandinavia, we promised (D. V.) to see them hastily this year. The routes of travel make it convenient to see the British friends again enroute, and this gives us pleasure, as we have many cordial solicitations. However, our time being extremely limited, we cannot do what we would. We must hope that it will be possible for quite a number of the friends to attend the London three-day convention. Our proposed itinerary follows:

Brother Russell expects to leave New York May 5th, on the steamer Mauratania, and he hopes to arrive at Liverpool May 11th. He will be glad to greet the friends as follows, as may suit their convenience:—

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Liverpool, May 11 | Stockholm, May 23 |
| Manchester, " 12 | Copenhagen, " 24 |
| Glasgow, " 13 | Berlin, " 25 |
| Edinburgh, " 14 | Elberfeld, " 27 |
| Bergen, Norway, " 17 | London Convention, " 29-31 |
| Christiana, " 19,20 | Due to arrive in Brooklyn, N. Y., June 8 |
| Orebro, Sweden, " 21,22 | |

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, TOUR

Leaving Brooklyn at 12:45 p. m., Thursday, July 8th, our first stop will be at Memphis, July 10th, via Frisco Line. Leaving at 11:40 p. m. (Ill. Central Ry.), we are due to reach

New Orleans Sunday, July 11, at 10:45 a. m. Leaving at 9 p. m. we hope to reach Houston, Texas, at 10:15 a. m., and leaving at 12:25 p. m., to reach San Antonio, Texas, at 7:35 a. m., July 13. Leaving at 9 a. m., July 14, via El Paso at 8:30 a. m. of the 15th, we hope to reach Los Angeles at 12:45 Friday night, July 16th. We leave at 5 p. m., July 17, arriving at Oakland, Cal., 8:45 a. m., July 18. Leaving at 8:57 p. m., July 19, we are due at Portland, Ore., 7:15 a. m., July 21, Wednesday. Leaving at 11:45 p. m. we are due at Seattle Thursday, at 8:15 a. m. Leaving at 9:30 p. m. (N. P. Ry.), Sunday, July 25, arrive at Spokane at 10:50 a. m., Monday, July 26. Leaving at 3:20 p. m. (O. S. L. Ry.) arrive at Butte, Mont., 7:40 a. m., July 27. Leave at 2 a. m., July 28, arrive at Denver at 10:50 a. m., July 29. Leave July 30, 1:15 p. m. (C. B. & Q. Ry.), arrive at St. Joseph, Mo., July 31, at 9:30 a. m. Leave August 2 at 1:45 p. m., arrive Huron, S. D., at 7 a. m., Aug. 3. Leaving at 8:10 a. m., arrive at Aberdeen, S. D., at 11:55 a. m. Leave (C. N. & St. P. Ry.) 8:35 p. m., arrive at St. Paul, Minn., at 8:10 a. m., August 4, and Chicago at 9:45 p. m. Leaving Chicago at 11:45 p. m. (P. R. R.) arrive at Pittsburg at 6:05 p. m., August 5. General Meeting at Allegheny Bible House, 7:30 p. m. Leave 9:40 p. m., arriving at Brooklyn 9 a. m., August 6. Of course, changes of railroad schedules may make necessary some slight modifications of the foregoing.

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|---------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| One-Day Convention, | Memphis, Tenn. | July 10 |
| " " " | New Orleans, La. | " 11 |
| " " " | Houston, Tex. | " 12 |
| " " " | San Antonio, Tex. | " 13 |
| " " " | Los Angeles, Cal. | " 17 |
| Three " " | Oakland, Cal. | " 17-19 |
| One " " | Portland, Ore. | " 21 |
| Four " " | Seattle, Wash. | " 22-25 |
| One " " | Spokane, Wash. | " 26 |
| " " " | Butte, Mont. | " 27 |
| Two " " | Denver, Colo. | " 29-30 |
| Five " " | St. Joseph, Mo. | July 29-Aug. 2 |
| Three " " | Aberdeen, S. D. | Aug. 1-3 |

The Convention Committees of the Churches at the places named will please confer with us respecting further details desired.

ROMAN CATHOLICS ENTHUSIASTIC

Roman Catholic dignity has been affronted and its fame mocked of late in regions where it has dominated for centuries—in Italy, France, Spain and Austria. But it finds its influence growing remarkably in the countries which threw off its yoke centuries ago—in Germany and Great Britain, as well as the United States. In the latter countries it is putting forth fresh energy and showing great vigor. Protestantism, through the influence of higher critics and evolutionists, etc., having lost its former ground of Protest, sees no reason at present for longer thinking of the Mother Church as "The Man of Sin." Now they find in her much to respect and to follow, and little to reprove, except that now she is more loyal to the Bible than they, barring the item of Purgatory and a few incidentals. Well did the Scriptures predict the "Rolling together of the heavens as a scroll"—Protestantism being one part and Catholicism the other. They find themselves touching all along the line which both unites them and holds them apart. The Scriptures show a still closer intimacy in the near future, after Protestantism shall have combined or federated.

The church of Rome is losing no opportunity for the display of her mighty power, that Protestants and politicians may take due notice. Recently, in the leading cities of the Protestant world, she has thrown her banners to the breeze and shows fresh vitality—(1) in London, a general council of Bishops such as has not been held for centuries, because prohibited by the British Law; (2) at Boston, the intellectual hub of earth, was held

a great celebration for the Pope's Jubilee—a monster affair in every sense of the word, more than 5000 musicians alone giving martial music to the other thousands who paraded, and the still other thousands who looked on; (3) at Chicago, the great Metropolis of the West, she has held another huge meeting of Catholic Societies. It is hoped by them that the English speaking world has thus been thoroughly impressed with the mighty power of the claimed successor of St. Peter, and claimed viceroy of Christ, who says that for thirty years he has been debarred of the power necessary for reigning with the kings and kingdoms of earth. Surely papacy is now claiming that she is no widow—but a mighty queen.—Rev. 18:7.

Papacy seems to have discovered that the land of the free yields the best return financially and otherwise, for she is expending lavishly in propaganda. She does not forget, however, that the sword is a mighty weapon, and with her religious propaganda her military endeavors keep pace, for she is encouraging her young men so to enlist in the regular army and State militia that there will be solid regiments of Catholics. She is giving similar attention to the supply of Catholic cadets for the battleships of the nation. Whoever thinks that the Pope and his counselors are asleep makes a great mistake. This great system, in co-operation with the Protestant Federation, will in a few years take a prominent part in the stirring events of the world's affairs.

THE FIRST GENTILE CONVERT

ACTS 10:1-48.—APRIL 4.

GOLDEN TEXT:—"In every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."—Acts 10:35.

This lesson seems to illustrate the necessity for our understanding of the "divine plan of the ages." After being blessed with this aid for several years we can scarcely appreciate what was our condition before this light shone on our pathway. Could we always have this in mind, it would assist us in the exercise of patience and forbearance towards our dear friends in all the nominal churches. In illustration of this we quote the words of a Doctor of Divinity on this very lesson—a man of much more than average intelligence, too. He says, "The narrow exclusiveness of the Jews, which had fortunately kept their religion pure for so many centuries, was a formidable barrier to this extension [of the gospel, beyond the Jews]. Christ himself had preached only to Jews. That was necessary, for the time of his ministry was too brief for a larger field, and the Jews at first would not have listened to a broader Gospel. But the time had come to break down the barrier of Jewish exclusiveness and carry out Christ's larger thought."

Not seeing the "divine plan of the ages," this teacher and most others impute to our Lord merely motives of expediency and broadening thought, and to the Jews narrowness and exclusiveness, whereas when once the "plan of the ages" is seen, it is discerned that it was God who was exclusive and who insisted upon the Jews separating themselves from Gentiles and who told them that they alone were his special nation, his chosen people. It was God who made a covenant with that nation and not with others. It was God who declared, "You only have I known (recognized) of all the families of the earth."—Amos 3:2.

It is the Apostle who explains to us that Israel had "much advantage every way" over all the other nations, because to them were committed exclusively the oracles of God—the law and the prophecies. To them alone Jesus came, not because of narrowness on his part, nor because of insufficiency of time on God's part. God delayed the sending of Messiah for over four thousand years. He could easily enough have made our Lord's ministry longer and have allowed it to extend to the Gentiles, had he chosen. On the contrary, our Lord declared, "I am not sent, save to the lost sheep of the House of Israel."—Matt. 15:24.

The proper view of the subject shows us that time and order have to do with every feature of the divine plan, that it has an exactness to a day. "But when the fulness of the due time was come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." (Gal. 4:4, 5) At exactly the right time he began his ministry. Exactly three and a half years thereafter it ended on the very day indicated in the type. On the very day indicated our Lord arose from the dead. On the very day indicated in the type the Pentecostal blessing came. And we may be sure that it was on the very day indicated that the incidents of this lesson occurred. That day must have been exactly three and a half years after our Lord's crucifixion.

Why? Because, according to divine prophecy, "seventy weeks" of years, 490 years, had been specifically set apart as a period of favor to the Jewish nation. It had been foretold that at the beginning of the last seven years of that period Messiah would come and that in the exact middle of that seven years Messiah would be cut off in death, but not for his own sins, but for the people's. It had been foretold that the prophecy would be marked by the anointing of the "most holy" at Pentecost and the further end of the seventieth week would also be marked as the termination of God's special exclusive favor toward Israel. It was so marked by the sending of the Gospel message to Cornelius, and by his begetting of the holy Spirit after he had believed the message.

The record shows that Cornelius was a just man, a reverential man, a benevolent man, a man every way prepared to be a follower of Jesus—a Christian, the only obstacle being that he was not a Jew. That obstacle was not Jewish prejudice, but an insurmountable one—God's unwillingness to deal with any others than his covenanted people of the seed of Abraham. So soon as the covenant arrangement with Israel terminated, and God's "due time" came for dealing with such Gentiles as were in proper condition of heart, he had no difficulty in finding messengers to convey the good tidings, as our lesson shows.

It is difficult for us to remember that but a few years ago we, like the mass of Christians, still somehow believed that we had been under the Law, as were the Jews; that the Ten Commandments and the sacrifices, etc., were all given to our fathers and that they were under the Jewish Law Covenant established at Mt. Sinai. We all believed also that, following our Lord's death, we were transferred from the Law Covenant, instituted by Moses, and came under the provisions of the New Covenant, which we supposed was in effect. It was in harmony with this

that we used to sing with the spirit, but with misunderstanding also, the words:—

"Free from the Law, O happy condition,
Jesus has died and there is remission."

The "Divine Plan of the Ages" showed us that the Law Covenant was not given to, and did not affect, Gentiles, but Israelites only. We were redeemed, but not redeemed from the Law; only the Jews, who were under that Law, could be redeemed from the curse of that Law. The same "divine plan of the ages" shows us now that the New Covenant belongs to natural Israel, and will go into effect at the beginning of the Millennium, and that we are not under it at all. It shows us that we are under a still higher and grander covenant than either the Law Covenant or New Covenant; that we are under the Faith Covenant, the Grace Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant, the Oath-Bound Covenant, as the Apostle says in Heb. 6:17-19 and Gal. 3:29.

Now we perceive that our high calling to be members of the Body of the Messiah, his church in glory, signifies that we with him, under his Headship, as his bride, will be associated in the mediating of that New Covenant between God and Israel and all the nations during the Millennial age. Our lesson teaches us that God has an intimate acquaintance with all of our affairs, and at the appropriate time

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform."

Our Lord indeed intimated that ultimately his Gospel message would be extended to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. The Jews themselves had always expected that they would first be nationally blessed, and that God's blessing through them would extend to other nations, just as it ultimately will do, not under their (old) Law Covenant, instituted by Moses, but under their New (Law) Covenant, which will be in due time instituted by Messiah glorified. The disciples, therefore, had no thought of the Gospel invitation being extended to the Gentiles. They considered that, like all the preceding favors of God, it would go to the Jew only. It was not bigotry and not prejudice that lay at the bottom of this, but due to the divine dealing of the past and the tenor of the divine promises. The disciples had not yet learned that the Gospel dispensation, with its Spiritual Israel, is, as it were, a parenthesis in the divine plan, with Israel dropped at its beginning and restored to position at its conclusion.

Cornelius had his vision first. He saw in a vision "openly," not in a dream, an angel of God coming in unto him. He talked with the angel and received the assurance that his prayers and his alms of years had now been received of the Lord, because the "due time" had come—the end of Israel's covenanted favor. We may be sure that at the same time the alms and prayers of all other Gentiles ascended up as incense to the Lord. We may be sure that blessings were arranged also for all such, and the Gospel sent to them, though not in so marked a manner as to Cornelius, because the Lord would make of his case a special lesson for the benefit of the apostles and of all of us who have lived since. In recounting this matter elsewhere Cornelius says that the angel told him to send for St. Peter and gave him his address and added, "When he is come, he shall tell thee words, which shall be to the saving of thyself and house."

It will be observed that Cornelius' alms and prayers had not saved him. The death of Christ had not saved him, though it was necessary to his salvation; and his good works and prayers were necessary to his preparation for a blessing. The blessing could not come to him, except through a knowledge of the truth, just as the Apostle assures us it shall ultimately reach all mankind. He declares, "God will have all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."—1 Tim. 2:4.

Let us not forget the importance God has attached to words—not to all words, nor to any words, but to the particular words or message of his grace, through the merit of Christ's blood. Cornelius was rejoiced, and showed his faith by immediately sending messengers to the Apostle. Meantime, while they were approaching Joppa, Peter at noon-time betook him to prayer, perhaps seeking special guidance as to what should be his next move in Christian work. He got the answer through a dream-vision and through the messengers of Cornelius. He went with the messengers, nothing fearing, and yet not for a moment presupposing what actually took place. He took with him six men, probably as witnesses, or as an escort, or because of the dignity of the person upon whom he was calling. He doubtless was surprised to find that Cornelius had invited into his house his kinsfolk and special neighbors, who with his own family made quite an assemblage. The simplicity of the century's faith was thus clearly attested. When St. Peter inquired why Cornelius had sent for him, he explained the visit of the

angel and declared that now they were ready to hear the words, the

"WONDERFUL WORDS OF LIFE"

Note well the fact that, even though the special favor promised Israel had ended, there was still but one way for the good tidings to reach Cornelius. St. Paul declares that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." It came not to him by impression. Just so today; the knowledge of the truth goes not to people, however ready for it, by mental impression, but still, as then, God honors and uses his faithful ones as his mouthpieces. Mark the expression, "When he is come, he shall tell thee words which shall be to the saving of thyself and house." Now, by reason of the art of printing, the message reaches many otherwise—by printed words.

Let us note carefully what these words of life were. They were the simple story of the Cross: The story of man's fall, his sentence to death, his hopelessness as respects extricating himself from that condition and sentence; and the remedy which God in his mercy provided. The essence of the message was that "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and rose again for our justification." The message continued, and showed how the justified ones were invited to become joint-sacrificers with and thus joint-sharers in Christ's coming glory. The centurion's heart had been troubled. There was something in the message that satisfied his longings as nothing else had ever done. He believed in the Redeemer and was thus justified. His consecration to the Lord, of years' standing, now became intelligent and specific. As his heart went out to the Lord in full acceptance of the divine terms, in full consecration of his little all to the divine service, the Lord accepted it, and manifested the acceptance; just as he had done with the consecrated Jewish believers at Pentecost. God having thus recognized Cornelius as a disciple and follower of Christ, a new creature begotten of the holy Spirit, Peter tells us that he could not believe otherwise than that it was right for him to explain

baptism to the centurion, and to give him water immersion, symbolic of the immersion into Christ's death, which he had already experienced.

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

Our Lord had declared that he would give St. Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven. A key symbolizes right or authority to open. On the day of Pentecost the Lord used St. Peter as his special mouthpiece in opening the door of the kingdom to the Jewish people, to all who were in the right condition of heart to receive its blessings. Thus we read that "Peter, standing up with the eleven, said," he being the spokesman. So here, again, when the time had come for the message of the Gospel to go to the Gentiles, it was St. Peter who was granted the privilege of throwing the door wide open by the sermon which he preached to Cornelius. The "key" or power to open on both occasions was used by St. Peter.

THE LESSON OF THE GOLDEN TEXT

These words of St. Peter do not signify that he had previously been mistaken in supposing that the divine favors were all confined to the Jewish nation. He had been right in that supposition. It was in line with all the Scriptural declarations. St. Peter meant by these words that he perceived that now God was no longer a respecter of persons and nationality; that now, henceforth, the righteous, God-fearing, in every nation were to be acceptable. He now perceived the meaning of the vision granted him on the house-top, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common or unclean." The cleansing at first was merely typical and to Israel only, accomplished through the blood of bulls and goats. The antitypical cleansing through the blood of Christ was confined for a time to Israel only. But now, in the Lord's providence, the middle wall of partition was broken down, so that all believers amongst the Gentiles, seeking fellowship with the Lord, might become adopted members in Spiritual Israel, the "household of faith," and might be covered by the merit of the better sacrifice of Christ.

THE HEART MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE HEAD

"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."—Prov. 4:23.

We realize that our heads need keeping: and some of us at one time might have been inclined to say, "Keep thy head with all diligence, in line with the doctrines of Christ, and thy heart will be all right, for God will keep it." This, however, is a mistake. God has stated the matter correctly. We are not competent to keep our heads. We are competent and responsible for the keeping of our hearts. If we diligently keep, watch, guard our hearts from evil, and in full harmony with the divine Word and its spirit of the truth, righteousness, love, God will do the rest. He will guide our imperfect reasoning faculties, and we shall know his doctrines.

Keeping the heart signifies keeping guard over our sentiments. It signifies a critical inspection of every motive of life. Why do we speak? What is the object desired? Why do we do this, or not do that thing? Is the motive honorable, just, loving? Do we love righteousness? Do we hate iniquity? Is the love of God being more and more shed abroad in our hearts? Is it increasing God-ward and man-ward, and toward the brethren? This is watching, "keeping our hearts," and implies that if a selfish thought or motive or ambition be found lurking anywhere, or seeking to guide in act or word, it should be promptly expelled—that the heart may be pure, clean. Keeping the heart means also activities in love, benevolence, helpfulness and the cultivation of thoughts and sentiments in accord with the divine. It means not only the purifying of the heart, but the garnishing of it with the fruits and graces of holiness and love, that it may be acceptable to the Lord. So surely as injustice or sin or impurity is harbored to any extent, the heart is proportionately defiled and proportionately unacceptable to the Lord, and in the way leading towards repudiation by him.

The words, "the issues of life," would remind a lawyer of the fact that when a case is tried in court the jurors are sworn to do their duty in respect to the issue joined—the decision to be reached. So all of the Lord's consecrated people are on trial. The issue has been joined. It means, (1) life or death eternal; and (2) additionally to those who win life there is another issue, namely, whether that life eternal shall be on the highest plane—of the divine nature and joint-heirship with Christ—or on the lower spirit plane of the great company—like unto the angels. Do we realize the issue joined in this trial, the outcome of which is so vital? If we do, and if we believe the Lord's declaration that the issue or result will depend upon our heart condition, then we see a reason why we should use "all diligence" in keeping our hearts pure, sweet, tender, loving, "a copy, Lord, of thine."

Once, when our eyes of understanding began to open and we

discerned the length and breadth and height and depth of love divine and the wonderful plan of salvation, we inclined to think that the number who would fail to attain life everlasting, either in this age or in the Millennium, would be a small number. We would even have inclined to the Universalist view that all would ultimately be saved, had it not been for certain texts of Scripture which clearly intimate that, according to the divine foreknowledge, there would be some who would die the second death, as a result of the "sin unto death"—"There is a sin unto death; I do not say that ye shall pray for it."—1 John 5:16.

But as we have become more and more familiar with the mind of the Lord as presented to us in his Word, we discern that none will be granted eternal life, except they shall attain a certain character development, and that that character development means not merely an outward loyalty and restraint from sin, but a heart loyalty and love for righteousness, and hatred toward iniquity. During the Millennium outward perfection will be the standard, yet ultimately in the end of that age, the heart development will be the test, which will determine who may go beyond to eternal life, and who may not.

The heart test may now be said to be the only one, because our flesh, justified, then consecrated to death, is not the new creature which hopes for glory, honor and immortality, but merely its imperfect servant or tool. The new creature's heart or affections must be loyal to the very highest principles of justice and love, and, according to its development along these lines, will be the divine decision for life or for death—on some plane or on no plane of being. The great company must have the Christ-like character, as well as the little flock and as well as the restitution class at the end of the Millennium. We are not to understand that there will be, for any of the consecrated, any further trial or education or development or testing after the present trial is ended. No one will be in either the little flock or the great company except those who are in loving loyalty to God, to the brethren, to the principles of righteousness. All others will be condemned as unfit for life eternal upon any plane of being.

Perhaps the worldly might say to us. It must be a great strain upon you and make your life miserable to be obliged to think continually of the right or the wrong of every act and every word and every thought, and to be obliged to repudiate and disown every sentiment not entirely just and loving. We reply, that at first it might have so appeared to us, but the Lord leads his people gently, graciously, step by step, to an appreciation of the principles of righteousness and love. Following on to know the Lord means, to such, continual growth in

grace as well as in knowledge. We are glad that we see distinctly the issue joined in our case—that it is for life or death. To us this is the chief consideration—the making of our calling and our election sure, to life eternal. As we get a glimpse of the wonderful things which God has in reservation for those who love him—earthly pleasures, self-denials, self-sacrifices, all lose their weight and power—and gradually we come to the place where we “delight” to know and to do the Lord’s will—to the mental attitude in which these divine regulations are not grievous to us, but really joyous. This means that our minds have been “transformed,” so that the things which we once loved, now we hate; and the things which once we hated now we love. Yet we approached this high position gradually. Those who come into present truth now have advantages in many respects, but we must also remember that as the time of testing grows shorter, it signifies that the tests themselves will be the sharper.

LIFE UNTO LIFE OR DEATH UNTO DEATH

The Apostle, contemplating the situation of those who have been saved by faith, through the knowledge of the Lord, and of his gracious plans, declares that the message becomes to such a life or a death message. The demand of our consecration to some appear onerous, burdensome. They have an odor of death that repels them, and leads on to second death. To others the ways of the Lord and the requirements of his holiness have a sweet odor, a life odor, bringing refreshment. Such an appreciation of the divine goodness and of the divine plan, the Apostle refers to as a sweet odor of life, and tending and leading up to the glorious life condition which they shall share in the resurrection of the blessed.

The Apostle realized that the message he was preaching would have one or the other effect upon all who had the spiritual ears. It would be to them either a savour of life unto life or of death unto death. Then he adds, “Who is sufficient for these things?” (2 Cor. 2:16) There is a tremendous strain of responsibility upon all who minister the Lord’s truth. Who is sufficient for these things? How can any of us fully grasp and comprehend the value of present opportunities? And how can those who, in the name of the Lord, present his message sufficiently realize the weight of responsibility attaching?

Summing up, then, let us each know that if we do not keep our hearts from the leaven of malice, envy, hatred and strife, the issue with us will be the second death, and in the interim assuredly we would lose much of the light and spiritual blessings which we once enjoyed. If, on the other hand, we keep out

the evils referred to, and put on the graces of the Lord’s Spirit—meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, brotherly kindness, love—the decision in our case will be life, eternal life. And in the interim, while waiting for our resurrection “change,” our experience will be continual growth in grace, in love, and in knowledge of the things freely given of the Lord to such as are in this heart condition. These shall know the truth and the truth shall make them free—not with the freedom of the unregenerate, but with the liberty of the sons of God—liberty to do right; liberty to suffer injustice for righteousness’ sake; liberty to lay down our lives for the brethren, and, in general, for the truth, and in doing good to all men as we have opportunity.

“TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES”

The Apostle’s words to the elders of the Ephesus church never were more fitting to the people of God in general than they are today. He said to them, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock, over the which the holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with the blood of his own Son. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore, watch and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”—Acts 20:28-31.

The elders everywhere need to take special heed; because in every trial the most favored and most prominent have the severest besetments and tests. Hence the Apostle exhorts, “Be not many of you teachers, brethren, knowing that a man shall receive the more severe testing.” We, likewise, exhort all the elders who in heart are pure, unselfish, that they have nothing but love and good wishes for all mankind, and that they become more and more filled with the fruits and graces of the holy Spirit, taking heed also to the flock. Remember, that the flock is the Lord’s and that you have a responsibility to the Lord, as well as to them. Remember, that you are to watch for their souls (interests) as those who must give an account to the Great Chief Shepherd. Remember, that the principal thing is love, in all; and, while not neglecting doctrines, give special heed to the development of the Lord’s Spirit amongst the various members of his body, that thus they may become “meet for the inheritance of the saints in light,” and, according to the divine will, be not suffered to stumble in this evil day, but, having done all, to stand complete in Christ, his body, his members, his joint-sacrificers, his joint-heirs.

DELIVERANCE IN ANSWER TO PRAYER

ACTS 12:1-19.—APRIL 11.

GOLDEN TEXT:—“The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.”—Psa. 34:7.

Our lesson is supposed to date about twelve years after our Lord’s crucifixion. A period of rest and prosperity was now followed by persecution. Herod Agrippa I. had been appointed King of Judea. He was grandson of Herod the Great, the murderer of the babes of Bethlehem. He was nephew of Herod Antipas, who beheaded John the Baptist. It was his son, Agrippa II., before whom the famous address was made by St. Paul. (Acts 26:28) He was not a Jew, but an Edomite, a descendant of Esau. He appears to have been desirous of the good will of the people, even at the cost of principle. He took pains to observe the minutia of Jewish ceremonies. He hung up in the temple the gold chain which the Emperor Caligula had given him. It is related that at a “Feast of Tabernacles” he caused the entire Book of Deuteronomy to be read in the hearing of the people, and that he “burst into theatrical tears” when the reader came to the words, “Thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, who is not thy brother.” Thereupon the populace obsequiously cried, “Don’t weep, Agrippa, you are our brother.”

PASSOVER SEASON SIFTING

On the lookout to curry favor with the Jews, especially the influential ones, Agrippa caused the Apostle James to be beheaded, and finding that this brought great pleasure to the Jews, he had the Apostle Peter arrested. The Greek word here rendered apprehend rather implies that his arrest was after searching. Probably all of the apostles were more or less secreted about that time, but, trusting to the sacredness of the Passover season, St. Peter ventured forth and was arrested and imprisoned, Agrippa intending his death directly at the close of the Passover week. Meantime, however, the Lord delivered him, as this lesson shows.

We can well imagine the sadness of the church at that Passover season, which must have reminded them considerably of the time of our Lord’s death and the alarm then amongst his followers. It may not be proven to the satisfaction of all, but to us for some years it has seemed as though each Passover sea-

son, each Memorial celebration, was a time of special trial and testing amongst the Lord’s followers. As Judas and Peter and all of the Lord’s disciples got their sifting at this particular season of the year, so, it does seem to us, the sifting and shaking, by which Satan desires to have others of the Lord’s followers, are specially permitted at the Memorial season. But whether this is a true supposition or not, it will surely not injure the Lord’s people to be specially on guard against the wiles of the adversary at these times—since we are to watch and pray always, lest we fall into temptation.

The thought of special trial, special temptation from the adversary at this season of the year, seems to have been the foundation for the so-called “Lenten Season,” or period of special restraint, fasting and prayer, which has come down to us through the oldest channels of church history. The fact that the “lenten season” is with many today a mere formality does not mean that it is so to all, nor that it was so originally. Strongly would we recommend the fasting and prayer at all times enjoyed in the Scriptures, and, if possible, that alertness be specially exercised by all of the consecrated during the forty days preceding the Memorial Supper.

As we have already explained, our self-denials are not merely along the lines of food and drink, but extend to all of our appetites. Nevertheless a very simple and very limited diet in the Spring of the year would undoubtedly be beneficial for the majority of mankind, even were there no spiritual blessings and prayers connected therewith. Winter cold bringing hearty appetites, the result toward Spring is apt to be a surfeited or over-charged condition of the system, from which it needs to be relieved by a measure of abstinence, which is as favorable to spirituality as surfeiting is unfavorable.

THE CHURCH PRAYED FOR PETER

St. Peter is supposed to have been imprisoned in the famous Castle of Antonio, possibly in the very same room in which our Lord was arraigned before Pilate, and the same one to which

Paul was subsequently taken when mobbed in Jerusalem. Peter had a guard of four quarternions (four soldiers each), who relieved each other every three hours. Two of the four were chained to Peter's arms, one to each arm, and a third was outside the door and a fourth in the passage leading to the outer iron gate. The power of divine grace helping in every time of need and giving peace amid alarms, is well illustrated in this case by the fact that under all these circumstances St. Peter was fast asleep when the angel of the Lord came to deliver him. The proprieties of the case are also illustrated by the fact that Peter's friends, the church, were not asleep, but praying for him. It was not for him to pray for himself deliverance from the power of Agrippa, for he had already consecrated his life unto death, and properly should feel quite ready to lay down his life at this time, if such proved to be the Lord's will in respect to him. For him to have asked for the prolongation of his life would have been to ask amiss, and would have manifested a wilfulness incompatible with a full consecration to the Lord's will. But with the church it is different. They could with all propriety, while expressing to the Lord their confidence in the divine supervision of the church's affairs, tell him also of their love for St. Peter and of how much his sacrificing in the service of the truth had done for them and was doing for them. They could properly enough express the hope that it might be the Lord's will that he should continue with them for their joy and comfort and upbuilding in the "most holy faith." It should not surprise us either that this prayer-meeting on St. Peter's account lasted all through the night and, for aught we know, other meetings of the same kind may have been held besides the one referred to in this lesson, which was at the home of Mary, the mother of Mark, the writer of the Book of Mark and the cousin of Barnabas, presumably the unnamed person of Mark 14:51.

It may be asked, Would it not have been appropriate for the church to have offered prayer and then to have retired as usual, leaving the results entirely with the Lord? We reply that the examples given us in the Scriptures fully warranted the all-night prayer-meeting and even its continuance for several days. Do we not know of our Lord's remaining all night in the mountain at prayer? Do we not remember his long and repeated prayers in Gethsemane? Do we not remember the Apostle's exhortation to the church, "Praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks"? Giving this a liberal construction as signifying a prayerful attitude of mind and continued looking to the Lord for his grace and guidance, nevertheless our Lord's parable of the importunate widow and her repeated comings and her reward all teach the same lesson of importunity. Besides, our Lord thus applied the parable, saying, "Shall not God avenge his very elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily."—Luke 18:7, 8.

In one sense of the word the fears and sufferings of the Lord's people and their trials and difficulties ascend to the Lord in prayer and call to divine justice for vengeance, recompense, punishments, without any word from his people to this effect. Rather their petition should be in line with Stephen's prayer for his enemies, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Nevertheless, as Abel's blood is said to have cried to the Lord for vengeance, so the blood of his saints is said to cry unto him day and night, "How long, O Lord, dost thou not judge and avenge?"—Rev. 6:10.

The Lord certainly does not wish us to understand that he has no oversight, arrangement or plans of his own, nor that the divine arm may be moved by our prayers in any direction at our pleasure, at any time. On the contrary, the Lord assures that all of his purposes shall be accomplished and that his Word shall not return to him void, "but shall prosper in the thing whereto it was sent." (Isa. 55:11) Nothing can alter the definite, fixed outlines of the divine program. But the Lord has evidently left certain of the filling in of our experiences subject to change or modification. These minor details he is ready to use for the blessing of his people, for the development of their faith. Thus in St. Peter's case the Lord was doubtless intending a deliverance in some manner, because he had a further work for him to do, but he allowed it to come about in such a manner as to indicate it as a reward of the faith of those who prayed for him. Otherwise the deliverance might have come sooner or later, and in response to faith or works along some other line.

The Lord evidently desires to cultivate in us a quality of faith, trust. Therefore he has made faith a condition for all of his blessings of the present age, and distinctly tells us that without faith it is impossible to please him, and that he desires us to "walk by faith and not by sight."—2 Cor. 5:7.

WHY ONE TAKEN AND THE OTHER LEFT

The question materially and properly arises, Why was

Herod permitted to kill the Apostle James and not permitted to kill the Apostle Peter? Was St. James unworthy of any further part in the Gospel work, or less worthy than the Apostle Peter? Was there not enough work for all, or was St. James permitted to die because he was ready for death, because he had finished his course? And was St. Peter preserved alive because he had not finished his course? None of these suggestions seems to be the correct one. Rather let us surmise that both apostles were loyal and acceptable to the Lord and at the mark of perfect love, fit for the kingdom. Let us suppose that the Lord preserved Peter because he had a special work for him to do, and that he allowed the beheading of St. James, not because there was nothing more that he could do, but because by such a death as he experienced and at such a time he could accomplish the most that was possible—a work which could not have been so well done at another time, nor by the death of another person. St. James, apparently, was the leader amongst the apostles and his execution would be a greater shock to the cause, awakening the followers of our Lord to renewed zeal and energy in the proclamation of the truth. It doubtless served to increase the appreciation of the people for the apostles, causing them to give still more earnest heed to their teachings and to realize how greatly the cause of the Lord had been made dependent upon them, the "twelve apostles" of the church.—Rev. 21:14.

This, then, would help to explain why the church prayed day and night for St. Peter. The loss of St. James made St. Peter and every other Apostle doubly precious in the estimation of the "household of faith." God intended that St. Peter should live to be an old man, for this was our Lord's prophecy respecting him. But the emergency proved a blessing to the church, by way of stirring up their pure minds to an appreciation of the Lord's cause in general and for St. Peter in particular. A similar lesson may be drawn today. As we see some ripe grains taken and other ripe grains left, it may mean that the Lord can use the death of the one the better and the life of the other the better, in his dealings with the church.

A REAL ANGEL, A REAL DELIVERER

The time in which the holy angels were permitted to materialize still continued a power possessed by them, but, we believe, is not now permitted to be exercised. It was between three and six o'clock in the last watch, for Peter was not missed until sunrise (Vat.), when the guards were changed. St. Peter, sleeping peacefully, was awakened by the angel, whose features were radiant, because this was necessary in order that the Apostle might discern that his deliverer was a holy being. The Scriptures mention numerous appearances of angels as men without radiant appearances. Peter was bidden to rise up. Quickly and simultaneously the chains which bound him to the soldier by either hand were loosed. He was instructed to put on his wooden shoes, or sandals, and to put on his outer garment, or cloak, and to follow his leader. We read that he followed, realizing the facts as those of a dream. Thus he was led past the first and second wards, or doors until they came to the great gate of the city, which opened of its own accord, and then the angel left him.

It is worthy of notice that the miracles performed here were only such as were beyond Peter's natural power. Whatever he could do he was required to do, namely, putting on of his sandals and his cloak, and following the angel. He could have been transported. His own sandals or other sandals could have been fastened to his feet. A new coat might have been provided. But the lesson is a more profitable one as it was given. Similarly in the Lord's dealings with us today, we should remember that it is ours to do everything within our power, and the Lord's to overrule all things for our good, and to supply our deficiencies from his abundance. Thus still he gives us day by day our daily bread, in the rain and the sunshine and the seed; but he expects us to labor for it, to plow the ground, to sow the seed, to harrow it, to thrash it, grind it and bake it.

"When Peter was come to himself," when he realized the facts in the case, that he was free, he said, "Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel and delivered me out of the hand of Herod and . . . of the Jews." St. Peter's faith was strengthened. Willing to die, he found that the Lord was willing that he should live and labor and endure, and he was equally pleased, rejoicing, we may be sure, for the privilege of further service, even though it would mean further sacrifices and sufferings for the Lord's sake and for the sake of his people.

Doubtless the angel started Peter in the direction of Mary's home, where the prayer was being made on his behalf. The description of the house with an outer gate implies that it was one of the better class. Peter's knock was heard by little Rose, for such is the meaning of Rhoda. So overjoyed was she that, forgetful to let him in, she ran first to tell the praying house-

hold that Peter was at the gate. Expecting no deliverance at such an hour, some thought the maiden mistaken, and then insisted that it must be his angel—in harmony with the prevalent thought that an angel had supervision of each individual of God's people and that such might personate the one under his protection.

The brethren were surprised at the Lord's answer to their petitions, because it came so unexpectedly as respects time. There was an outburst of excitement and questions, which the Apostle was obliged to silence by the shaking of his hands. Then he narrated the wonderful story of his deliverance and bade them tell it to the other James, the brother (cousin) of Jesus, and the other disciples. Then Peter went his way, whether to another city or to another house, we do not know. In any event, he exercised wisdom in not needlessly provoking Herod. There was consternation with the coming of daylight. Later on in the same chapter we learn of another visit of the angel of the Lord—this second time to smite Herod with disease (intestinal worms), from which he subsequently died. This

chapter then shows us the power of Satan, the power of God, and the power of prayer.

THE GOLDEN TEXT

Of course, our Golden Text is a symbolical statement illustrative of the divine guardianship of all those who are truly his. The thought is the continual supervision of our affairs by the Lord. Whether we think of the angel of the Lord as one of the heavenly host specially appointed on our behalf, or whether we think of him from the standpoint of the various powers of nature, the levers of which are all in the divine care, it matters not. We have the assurance that the Father himself loves us and that all the heavenly powers are pledged to those whom he has accepted in Christ Jesus, and these unitedly guarantee blessings to all those who abide in God's love. This means to abide in faith in the Redeemer. It means to abide loyal to our consecration, to do the Father's will to the extent of our ability. That will is declared to be that we shall love the Lord supremely, our neighbor as ourselves, and all the members of the household of faith, as Christ loved us.

"MAKE STRAIGHT PATHS FOR YOUR FEET"

HEBREWS 12:13.

When the Apostle says, "Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way," what does he mean? He does not mean that we should literally shovel a path smooth, nor does he refer to our literal feet. All will agree to this. Evidently the Apostle's teaching is that each one of the Lord's sheep has more or less of earthly blemish (imperfection), in consequence of which lameness it is difficult for him to make steady progress in the footsteps of our Lord. He urges that as we find out what our weaknesses are, physical and mental, we should endeavor to shape our course of life accordingly, so as to be able to overcome the difficulties of the way and the besetments of the adversary. We make the straight paths by choosing such a course as will not unnecessarily aggravate and excite our weaknesses, and thus make us the more lame. We are to seek to overcome the lameness, and, to do so, are not only to pray, "Abandon us not in temptation," but are to seek to avoid the temptation in all ways. How do we do this? We answer, By the exercise of our wills, or determination—by mental resolutions; or, in other words, by making vows or solemn promises to the Lord respecting our determinations to take the proper course. Anyone, therefore, who has followed the Apostle's injunction in our text has made vows to the Lord, which he should be faithful in performing, if he would come off a victor and have the divine approval.

The Lord does not lay these vows upon us, commanding us to do thus, and not to do so. This would be placing us under law and would hinder us from offering sacrifices as an antitypical priesthood. Only in general terms, therefore, does the Lord speak to his people, indicating to them the right path and leaving to them the matter of making their vows, according to their necessities, and paying their vows, and thus making progress in grace and knowledge and in character development. Whoever has not seen his need of making resolutions, making vows to the Lord, has not recognized the first principle of Christian development. He who finds from the enemy's attack where his wall is weakest, and who then repairs the weak places as quickly as ascertained, does so by resolution to the Lord—by vows. He who has not discovered any weaknesses in his character is duly blind and "cannot see afar off." He who has not attempted to correct his weaknesses by resolutions to the Lord, vows to the Lord, has not yet begun that character development which must be completed before he can be pronounced an overcomer.

Let us here present two dialogues bearing upon this question of character development by the aid of vows or resolutions:—

Bro. A—Have you taken the vow recently suggested to us in the WATCH TOWER?

Bro. B—No. It seems to me that however useful it may be to others, it would not be so for me.

A—Does the old man rebel against being tied down too tightly?

B—I hope that is not the case. It seems to me that I already am doing practically everything that is stipulated in the vow, and hence, that I need not take it. With reference to the first section, of praying for God's will to more thoroughly control my life, I already do that. Section two I already observe to the full—remembering my dear co-laborers in the harvest work every day and striving to appreciate more fully my own privileges in it. As for section three, I certainly strive daily to scrutinize thoughts and words and actions, as I believe that every Christian should do. How can we do otherwise? Referring to section four, I long ago resolved to have

nothing to do with Occultism or Spiritism, recognizing them as having to do with the adversary. I have long observed the spirit of this section and, I might say, its letter also, with the exception of the reference to being in a room alone with one of the opposite sex, with the door wide open. I have not always followed that plan, but am free to confess that it would be a very good general rule to follow, and that it would save many people from trouble and, perhaps, be advantageous to myself.

A—Why, Brother B, as I understand you, you have already taken these various parts of the vow as mental resolutions to the Lord, in their spirit, if not in their letter. The difference seems to be that you have made separate vows of each point, whereas the WATCH TOWER has aggregated these various points into one vow.

B—Perhaps that is a proper way of stating the matter and yet, understand me, I have not bound myself as respects the future, but merely have this ideal before my mind as a proper course; then, as each case comes before the bar of my judgment, I decide it on its own merits entirely, and accordingly, if you please, resolve respecting that one case, or vow respecting that one case, that I will follow such a course.

A—I see; but, dear Brother, that course gives you a whole lot of vowing many times a day. It may be that you have an extraordinary well-balanced mind and that you have little difficulty in recognizing the line of principle in all of life's affairs, thus being able to decide each little question as it comes to you quickly, promptly, correctly, and that your mind is not liable to swerve from the principles of righteousness, even under pressure of temptations. If so, I can see that your plan of testing each little question as it comes and vowing or resolving on each point, and thus making many vows for one day, may, perhaps, be a safe enough plan for you, but would that plan be the safest and best for everybody, do you think? Surely you and I know some of God's dear people who are not very quick in their application of principles and doctrines to the affairs of life, some who are quite likely to be a little unbalanced and swerved in the presence of temptation. Would it not be wise for such to make their vows with cool deliberation, in harmony with the Divine will, when not beset with temptation, and thus to guide their footsteps, not merely for that day and moment, but for all the future days of life? Would not this be in full accord with the Apostle's exhortation of our text, "Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way"? Further, dear brother, if you already are recognizing these principles in your daily life, are you not leaving open a door to the Adversary, through which some time he might intrude upon you and pervert your judgment under some kinds of temptation which we cannot now surmise in detail?

If you are already bound by the principles which obtain in this vow, as you admit, would it not be fastening on the armor, as it were, for you to take the vow and thus relieve yourself from an interminable amount of consideration, questioning and deciding left to be done at the most ungodly and unfavorable moment, when the enemy is before you, with his temptations? Besides, dear brother, as St. Paul declares himself willing to resolve or vow to eat no more meat, if thereby he would help a weaker brother, would not that be a valuable consideration for us in respect to this vow, and an assistance to us in determining what we would best do to help the brethren, especially if we perceive that the enemy is assaulting the flock, and particularly when we remember

that it is a part of our covenant with the Lord, not only to assist the brethren in so slight a matter as this, but, if necessity calls for it, to lay down our lives for them?

Brother C, what do you think of the vow? Have you declared or subscribed it to the Lord as yours? Is it your solemn resolution before the Lord that you will follow the various points outlined in the suggested vow?

C—No; I have not taken it. I confess that I am afraid of it—fearful that I could not keep it.

A—Why, dear brother, I am surprised at your expression. Did I not understand aright that you had made a full consecration of your life, your rights, your liberties, your all, to the Lord, even unto death? If so, that vow, or resolution, which you probably also symbolized in baptism, and which, therefore, is termed your baptismal vow, is still upon you and is all-comprehensive? If you can keep that vow, you certainly will have little trouble in keeping the vow suggested in the WATCH TOWER. Tell us, please, what features seem to you so burdensome, so impossible? Surely not the first?

C—No; I desire, surely, God's will to rule more and more in my heart and in my mortal body.

A—Well, surely it is not the second point of the vow which you object to—so surely as you are consecrated to the Lord and enjoying the light of the present harvest work and your own privilege in connection with it and all the dear co-laborers! You surely remember these every day, or ought to. You are surely losing a blessing if you do not do so. I advise that you so resolve at once and that you note carefully the blessing that will thus come to you, as you think about the work of the Lord and his people and your own harvest privilege and opportunities. Quite a good many report that they are having blessings along this very line—that as they think daily of their privileges in the harvest field, it strengthens their resolutions and gives them courage to thrust in the sickle of truth. Tell me, dear brother, that you do not oppose, but fully endorse that feature of the vow.

C—Well, of course, when you put it that way, I agree partly. But suppose that I should fail some day to thus think and pray, either because of forgetfulness or because of sickness, or what not?

A—If you should be delirious or lie unconscious, so that you could neither think nor pray, you would not be responsible. Likewise, if, in spite of your very best endeavor or resolution, the matter slipped your mind, you would not be responsible, because no man can do beyond his ability, and the vow expressly declares for things that are reasonably possible by God's assisting grace. However, after taking the vow you would assuredly find yourself living in that higher atmosphere in which you would be as unlikely to forget the harvest work and co-laborers, as to forget your meals. More and more it would become a part of your very life, and help to raise your thoughts from the things of earth to the heavenly things and to reset frequently your affections on the things which are above. Look, now, at the third section of the vow. Surely, dear Brother C, there is nothing in that section which your heart would not approve. Have you not already resolved to God and vowed to him to scrutinize your thoughts and words and doings, with a view to better service to him and to the brethren? I surely hope so, dear brother, for otherwise how could I think of you as a consecrated Christian at all?

C—Oh! yes. I agree to it that that is all very fine, but can I watch every thought and word and act?

A—Remember, dear brother, that you, the new creature, have an enemy very close to you all the time—your old self. That old self would like to have you, the new creature, off guard, so that you would not so carefully scrutinize every thought, every word, every act. It is that old self that is now fighting the vow and saying, "Don't bind me any tighter, I have little enough liberty now." You must not mind what the old man says, dear brother. Listen, instead, for the Lord's voice. Through the Apostle, he tells us to kill the old man. "Mortify, therefore, your members, which are upon the earth." (Col. 3:5) A large part of your difficulty, dear brother, and of the difficulties of all who seek to walk in the narrow way, is that the old man cries out and wants to retain liberty and life, but it is contrary to the interests of the new creature that any attention should be paid to it. Tell him at once that you thought that he was dead and buried long ago, and are only finding out to the contrary now, and that by this vow you intend to kill him outright and screw down his coffin-lid. It is your old man that does not like the vow, dear brother, and not you, the new creature, who must certainly approve it as being a help to yourself and to all the dear household of faith.

Brother C, I understand that you said some very unkind things in respect to those who took the vow—that you both thought evil and spoke evil, and acted in an improper man-

ner. Dear Brother, this was surely not you, the new creature, but the old creature, in command. How beneficial it would have been to you had you taken the vow, and thus have impressed upon your mind a careful scrutiny of your every thought and word and act! It is useless for us to pray, "Abandon us not unto temptation, but deliver us from the evil one," if, when the Lord shows us how we may ward off temptation and put a barrier between the evil one and ourselves, we refuse to heed his counsel.

I cannot think that the fourth part of the vow is impossible to you, dear Brother C, nor that you really consider it unwise, in view of what we know of our adversary and his various wiles, and in view of what the Scriptures tell us of his greater power in the closing of this Harvest time; you surely would not consider it wise to be careless in respect to the particular traps which we recognize are already set and baited for the world and for the church during "the hour of temptation" which is now upon the whole world. Surely you are agreed that there are only two captains, the Lord and the adversary, and that it is a part of our duty, if we would be faithful soldiers of the cross, to oppose Satan's tactics and devices in every way, shape and form, do you not?

C—Surely so, dear Brother A. And I believe that I can think of no objection on that score, either.

A—Now, Brother C, we are to the last paragraph of the vow. Your objection must be here, or you have none. What is the objection? You say you are afraid you cannot keep it. My thought, dear brother, is the very reverse—that you need not be afraid if you do not keep it. Are you afraid that you cannot conduct yourself always toward those of the opposite sex in private, as you do in public, in the presence of the Lord's people? If you have weaknesses along that line, dear brother, it is the very point which you need to fortify by just such a vow as this.

C—I fear that I should forget, or that, if I remembered, I would not be equal to the test.

A—Dear brother, it is the new creature that would make this vow. The old creature would never make it. The new creature resolves to do its best, resolves to God that, to the best of its ability, it will follow this course. And God says to the new creature in return, "My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness." What remains in the way, dear brother? Nothing, except it be a lack of faith on your part to accept the necessary grace and strength, or unless it be a lack of determination, which would mean a lack of consecration, which would imply that you were living in neglect of your original consecration vow, or baptismal vow. By all means, dear brother, remedy this matter. Exercise faith and determination to keep your original covenant, to keep your human will dead. This vow will undoubtedly assist you in the carrying out of such a determination, and, if so, it will help you to make your calling and election sure. Without such a determination, apparently, you could never make it sure.

Now, for the last clause of the vow. What is the objection here? Is there any?

C—My pride objects a little to the suggestion, though I acknowledge that the arrangement would be a safeguard and that, under its operation, no doubt, many would be preserved from indiscretion whose tendencies might not be spiritual and might even be toward carnality.

A—Well, my dear Brother C, your two arguments in opposition are the strongest arguments in favor of the vow. If you have any pride on the subject, mortify it, deaden it. "Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God." Do it for the sake of others, if not for your own sake, though you admit that you have need of it for your own sake. As for the second point you make, surely that is an argument in favor of the vow. It is a barricade, coming between the Lord's people and special temptation. If it should save from injury only one for whom Christ died, would it not be worth while for us all to take the vow? But I assure you, dear Brother C, that I have information which leads me to think that hundreds of the Lord's people would be safeguarded by that vow, and be nearer to the Lord, more closely "Under the shadow of his wings," and, consequently, farther from the great adversary, the fowler of Psalm 91. I urge you, dear brother, to take the vow, not as a new one, for your original vow of consecration was all-inclusive. It is positive. This vow is in a sense negative. In this vow we formulate a list of some of the things we will not do, because we believe that by their avoidance we would be brought nearer to the Lord and separated from the power of the adversary, and be ready more fully to render assistance to the brethren, who, with ourselves, are struggling up Zion's Hill in the narrow way.

Do not take the vow to please Brother Russell, nor as a