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"I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people."
"There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,
who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

A Dark Cloud and its Silver Lining.

BY JOHN G. WHITTIER.

In the Minister's morning sermon he told of the primal fall,
And how, henceforth, the wrath of God rested on each and all ;
And how, of His will and pleasure, all souls, save a chosen few,
Were doomed to eternal torture, and held in the way thereto.
Yet never, by Faith's unreason, a saintlier soul was tried,
And never the harsh old lesson a tenderer heart belied.
And after the painful service, on that pleasant, bright first day,
He walked with his little daughter thro' the apple bloom of May.
Sweet in the fresh green meadow sparrow and blackbird sung ;
Above him its tinted petals the blossoming orchard hung.
Around, on the wonderful glory, the minister looked and smiled :
"How good is the Lord, who gives us these gifts from His hand,
my child."
"Behold in the bloom of apples, and the violets in the sward,
A hint of the old lost beauty of the garden of the Lord."
Then upspoke the little maiden, treading on snow and pink,
"O father ! these pretty blossoms are very wicked, I think.
"Had there been no garden of Eden, there never had been a fall ;
And if never a tree had blossomed, God would have loved us all."
"Hush, child !" the Father answered, "By His decree men fell ;
His ways are in clouds and darkness, but He doeth all things well."
"And whether by His ordaining to us cometh good or ill,
Joy or pain, or light or shadow, we must fear and love Him still."
"Oh, I fear Him !" said the daughter, "and I try to love Him, too ;
But I wish He were kind and gentle—kind and loving as you."

The minister groaned in spirit, as the tremulous lips of pain,
And wide, wet eyes uplifted, questioned his own in vain.
Bowing his head, he pondered the words of his little one,
Had he erred in his life-long teachings, and wrong to his Master done?
To what grim and dreadful idol had he lent the holiest name?
Did his own heart, loving and human, the God of his worship shame?
And lo! from the bloom and greenness, from the tender skies above,
And the face of his little daughter, he read a lesson of love.
No more as the cloudy terror of Sinai's mount of law,
But as Christ in the Syrian lilies the vision of God he saw.
And as when, in the clefts of Horeb, of old was His presence known,
The dread, ineffable glory was infinite goodness alone.
Thereafter his hearers noted in his prayers a tenderer strain,
And never the message of hatred burned on his lips again,
And the scoffing tongue was prayerful, and the blinded eyes found sight,
And hearts, as flint aforetime, grew soft in his warmth and light.

The Silver Lining of the Dark Cloud.

The poet has graphically pictured the darkness which has so long oppressed God's people: but the same God who is now lifting the curtain and bringing to light labor-saving conveniences, preparatory to the great reign of righteousness, peace and blessing, called the Millennium, is also bringing to light certain teachings in his Word bearing upon the same period, showing that he has yet in store for that time great spiritual blessings for men. And this is only what we should expect, according to God's promise (Dan. 12 : 4, 9 ; 1 Thes. 5 : 4-6 ; Luke 8 : 10), and according to our prayer, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven."

In the light of this further unfolding of the Scriptures it appears that we and many of God's people have been right in urging that God's character would yet be cleared of the charges of injustice and cruelty so long urged against Him by scoffers, and supported not only by the creeds of Christendom, but seemingly also by some dark-looking passages in the Bible.

But we can only give you a mere hint of the blessing and encouragement now obtainable by those who hunger and thirst after righteousness—truth, etc. The light has

come through studying God's plan *dispensationally*—recognizing the various ages as connected in one great, good, loving plan which God had purposed in himself before the creation of our race, which *began* to be accomplished when Christ our Lord died for our sins, and which is to be fully accomplished by Christ and His Church glorified, during an age just dawning, whose light is even now waking up the world. The key to the understanding of God's gracious plan as long laid hidden in six words in our text—"A ransom for all," and the assurance that this favour for all shall reach them in God's "*due time*."

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"I believe it is the rigidity of these teachings that makes atheists and infidels and sceptics—makes Christians unhappy and brings their gray hairs down in sorrow to the grave—a lost child, a lost soul! . . ."

"This wonderful book makes no assertions that are not well sustained by the Scriptures. It is built up stone by stone, and upon every stone is the text, and it becomes a pyramid of God's love, and mercy, and wisdom.

"There is nothing in the Bible that the author denies or doubts, but there are many texts that he throws a flood of light upon that seems to remove from them the dark and gloomy meaning. I see that editors of leading journals, and many orthodox ministers of different denominations, have endorsed it and have confessed to this new and comforting light that has dawned upon the interpretation of God's book. Then let every man read and ponder and take comfort, for we are all prisoners of hope. This is an age of advanced thought, and more thinking is done than ever before—men dare to think now. Light—more light is the watch-word."—*C. T. Smith* ("B. Arp.")

"I am surprised at the truth it reveals. Truly 'the half was never told.' I am greatly blessed in the study of God's Word, which is made more plain."—*C. E. Cook*.

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