

And makes all within me rejoice;" and  
 "While I am so happy in him,  
 December's as pleasant as May."

King David was longing for the joy and gladness which he had experienced in times past, and figuratively he likens himself to one whose bones had been broken. He knew that his joy and comfort would return if he could but have back again the Lord's favor. He knew, too, that the Lord could not look upon sin with any allowance, hence his prayer: "Hide thy face from my sins and blot out mine iniquities [unrighteousnesses]. 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."

No true Christian can read these words without feeling a deep sympathy with the different expressions; and even though as new creatures in Christ Jesus we have had no experience with such terrible sins as those which weighed upon the heart of David, nevertheless our higher responsibilities and higher conceptions of sin under the "new commandment" and under the instructions of the holy Spirit, as sons of God, cause us to feel with proportionate weight transgressions which in the sight of the world would appear nothing—such, for instance, as we have just mentioned: covetousness, hatred, slander, which are thefts and murders from the higher standpoint of the divine view appropriate to the new creation.

In verse 13 the prophet proposes to the Lord that his discomfiture in divine disfavor was used for the instruction of others,—to show transgressors the Lord's ways and to turn sinners from the evil of their course. How appropriate this thought to us! Not until we know experimentally through faith in the blood of Christ that our sins have been put out of the Father's sight, not until we have experienced the joys of his salvation and forgiveness, are we in any condition to be servants to the truth or illustrations to others. Hence we see that it is only those who have been begotten of the holy Spirit who are anointed to preach the Gospel. To others the Lord says, "What hast thou to do to take my word into thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction and castest my words behind thee?"—refusing to submit to the divine requirements.

The 14th verse repeats the same thought in a different form. If the Lord will deliver him from his guilt in connection with his sin, his tongue shall thereafter sing loudly the Lord's righteousness—not David's righteousness. This is the song that all the blood-washed may sing, "True and righteous are all thy ways, Lord God Almighty. Thou hast redeemed us from amongst men." None of us have any right to sing our own righteousness, for as the Apostle declares, "There is none righteous, no, not one." The mission of the cleansed ones is to accept and use the Lord's mercy towards them, to extol his righteousness, to acknowledge their unworthiness and to call upon others to recognize this fountain of righteousness and forgiveness.

"O Lord, open thou my lips: and my mouth shall show forth thy praise." This expression implies that none need expect to have a proper opening of their mouths to show forth the Lord's praises, and give the call from darkness into his marvelous light, unless the Lord shall first have opened their lips with his mercy and truth; for otherwise how could any expect to tell the glad tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people? This equally implies that all who have had forgiveness of sins should be in a condition of spirit to make a full consecration of their all to the Lord, and then all such should expect an unsealing of their lips, that the message of God's truth and grace may flow out from them for the instruction and blessing of others—as it is written, "Grace is poured upon thy lips." "Thou hast put a new song in my mouth, even the loving-kindness of our God." While these are appropriate specially to our dear Redeemer, they are appropriate

also to every member of "the church which is his body," and all claiming to be of "the body," who have never had their lips unsealed to confess the Lord to the extent of their opportunity, have reason to question everything pertaining to their relationship to the Lord.

In verses 16 and 17 the King shows that he had acquired a deep insight into the meaning of some of the typical sacrifices;—though probably, by inspiration, he wrote more wisely than he understood. As we have seen in our study of Tabernacle Shadows of Better Sacrifices, only the Day of Atonement sacrifices were sin offerings, the burnt offerings and peace offerings of the remainder of the year representing the consecration to the Lord and his service. Grasping this thought prophetically, to whatever extent he also grasped it intellectually, King David expressed his realization that the Lord is pleased rather with a broken and contrite condition of heart than with burnt offerings, which were but types. So, too, we learn that nothing that we can give the Lord, even after our acceptance in Christ, has any value in his sight until first of all we have given him ourselves,—our hearts, our wills.

Let us ever keep in memory that a broken and contrite heart the Lord never despises, will never spurn. Therefore into whatever difficulty any of the Lord's people of the new creation may stumble, if they find themselves hungering for the Lord's fellowship and forgiveness, if they find their hearts contrite and broken, let them not despair, but remember that God has made a provision through the merit of Christ which enables him to accept and justify freely from all sin all that come unto him through Jesus—through faith in his blood. There is a sin unto death—a sin unto the second death—from which there will be no recovery, no resurrection; but those who have broken and contrite hearts on account of their sins may know that they have not committed "the sin unto death," for their condition of heart proves this, as the Apostle declares: "It is impossible to renew again unto repentance" any who have committed the sin unto death—wilful sinners against full light and knowledge. Let all, therefore, rejoice in the grace of our God, who is able through Christ, his accepted way, to save unto the uttermost all who come to him, laying aside sin and its desires.

"Now, if any man [of the church stumble into] sin [through weakness and temptation—not intentionally] we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 2:1) Such, therefore, may come with faith to the throne of the heavenly grace that they may obtain mercy and find grace to help in every (future) time of need. (Heb. 4:16) But, like David, their prayers and hopes should be for a restoration of divine favor and not for escape from chastisements needful to their correction. God forgave David, but also chastened him.—2 Sam. 12:11-14.

Surely King David must have learned a great lesson in mercy from his sad experience. How many times must he have called to mind his response to Nathan's parable, "The man that hath done this thing is worthy of death: and he shall restore the lamb four fold, because he did this thing and because he had no pity!" Alas, poor David! these words showed that he had a mind, a heart, that was no stranger to justice and pity in other men's affairs, and hence that he was the more guilty in his much more serious violations of justice and compassion. "Blessed is he that is not condemned in that which he alloweth,"—who is not condemned by his own declarations in respect to the affairs of others. Oh, how merciful to the failings of others it should make us when we remember our dear Redeemer's words, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses"; and when again we remember that we may not even pray for forgiveness of our sins unless we from the heart forgive those who have injured us and again desire our fellowship.

## TO OUR GERMAN FRIENDS

Our dear Brother Otto A. Koetitz has just left us for Germany, his wife and child accompanying him. He goes to take the place of Brother Hennings as manager of the Elberfeld Branch. Brother Hennings, with his wife, will proceed to

Australia, where he will open another Branch Office. Let us all join in prayer for divine blessings upon these brethren in their new fields of labor.

## TO FOURTH CLASS POSTMASTERS

We should be pleased to hear from all of our friends who hold positions as Fourth Class Postmasters, and who would enjoy the privilege of serving the truth. We are aware that

there are a number of such, and we should be glad to have word from them at as early a date as possible. There is work to be done.

# VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER

## FALLING FROM THE FAITH

Not content with showing from the Scriptures that we are living in the "harvest" of this age, when the Lord as reaper will separate thoroughly between the genuine and the nominal, imitation "wheat," gathering all of the former into the kingdom "garner," we have endeavored from time to time to point out the fulfilment of this all around us. As already indicated, this "falling" appropriately appears first among the teachers in churchianity—the masses readily following their blind leaders into the ditch of unbelief.

One of the notable evidences of this growth of unbelief in God's Word and in the entire plan of salvation which it alone sets forth, is found in the following extracts clipped from a recent issue of *The Ram's Horn*. Not because the writer, Rev. R. F. Horton, D. D., of London, is higher in position than others who have taken the same stand (or rather have similarly lost their *standing* and fallen into unbelief); nor because *The Ram's Horn* is the only or even the leading religious paper to publish such open defiance to the Word, but because the journal was started as an opponent to infidelity—as a champion of the Bible and of faith in "the blood of the cross" as the only ground of forgiveness of sins—the only basis of the sinner's justification before God.

The matter is presented in the Question and Answer form, and is given the full indorsement of the journal. It follows:—

*"Do you believe that man was evolved from the lower forms of life, or created as related in Genesis?"*

"I believe that man was slowly evolved from lower forms, and that evolution is even now not complete; but I also believe he is being evolved into the likeness of the image of God. Men as individuals are in all degrees of evolution. The image of God is what logicians used to call the final cause of man, the goal and purpose for which man began his adventurous career. The goal explains the means. Man is here with his face towards the goal, and the goal is the measure of the stature of Christ. Evolution cannot explain causes, cannot explain life itself, but must draw on a region of truth beyond itself to explain its own processes.

*"Do you believe in the fall as related in the Bible?"*

"Yes, exactly as related—as an allegory, a parable in order to explain the mystery of moral and spiritual evil, remembering that Adam is but the Hebrew word for man, and Eve the Hebrew word for life. The story is the pictorial presentation of that alienation from God which is the constant experience of human life, caused by disobedience. We disobey and know it, reach out our hands, and in strange inflation of our little godless minds we set up ourselves, and by self-exaltation are ruined because we have left our God. The fall is strangely illustrated by the writings of atheists."

*The Ram's Horn's* editor properly calls these "great questions" and their answers "clear cut and definite." We are glad to have the truth clearly and definitely presented, and when error is stated we prefer to have it *definitely* proclaimed also; there is less danger that it will deceive ordinary readers. We only wish that Rev. Horton had been still more explicit: some of the Lord's unsuspecting sheep will still be in danger of being deceived by these answers, and it shall be our duty and privilege to help them get clearer light upon the *full meaning* of the explanations.

The reply to the first question is *clear cut* in its denial of the Bible's account—that God *created* man in his own image; a very different thing from creating him either as a higher order of monkey or as a microbe, and expecting him to attain the divine image by his own efforts. Indeed, Dr. Horton totally ignores God's creative work in man when he speaks of "the goal and purpose for which *man began his* adventurous career." The Bible teaches that it is God's purposes and not man's that are being worked out, and that God gave man his start—and a good start at that—in an Eden whose every condition was *fit* for the testing of one already in the divine image and *on trial* to determine his obedient loyalty to his Creator's commands: the reward of obedience being a continuation of the divine image and favor unto life everlasting, and that of disobedience the loss of that image and favor in death.

Dr. Horton declares that "the goal explains the means." By this his readers are to understand that the past six thousand years have marked such progress amongst men as to imply that the process, continued, will result in man's attainment of God's image. Evolution is the "*means*" this eminent D. D. credits for all the progress of the world—Evolution is the Savior he lauds for raising man from lower planes of existence; and still uplifting him will, he hopes, *ultimately* make him an image of God. He does not tell us if he has *any* hopes for those now dying and for those who have died for centuries past without attaining God's image. He leaves us to wonder whether he expects that such will never have God's image, or

whether he believes that a process of evolution continues beyond the tomb, and that it will ultimately "*save unto the uttermost*." If he carries evolution into the heavenly conditions, would not consistency require him to claim that the angels are evolving? and that God himself is evolving? And if so, if God is not yet perfect, how can Dr. Horton or anyone else speak of man's becoming an image of a God who has not yet evolved into a definite, fixed character?

When considering that man is imperfect, and that his proper aim should be perfection, we are not to take Dr. Horton's Evolution theory as the only one that will explain the situation. God's Word, through his chosen mouthpieces—his Son, the apostles and the prophets—is more trustworthy than Dr. Horton. God's explanation of present conditions is that, "By one man's disobedience sin entered the world, and death by [as the result of] sin; and so [thus] death passed upon all men." (Rom. 5:12) The Apostle explains the lesser degradation of some and the greater depravity of others by saying that, while all sinned and fell, some indulged more wilfully and fell more deeply than others. When they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise they became fools, . . . wherefore God gave them up to uncleanness through lusts of their own hearts . . . who changed the truth of God into a lie. . . . And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient,—being filled with all unrighteousness.—Rom. 1:21-29.

This is the Bible side of the question—not that monkeys set for themselves as a goal an imaginary image of God, and have gotten so far along toward it as is represented by present-day civilization, but that man in God's image was disobedient to his Creator's commands and sought out many inventions and degraded himself (Eccl. 7:29), and God has permitted him to set low standards and ideals before himself to his own ruin. The Bible accredits the high ideals which are doing so much to lift man out of degradation not to anything in monkeys or fallen men, but to God's revelations of his plan of salvation, which, however imperfectly understood, is "*the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth*," and indirectly a power for good upon the heathen as well as upon the people of civilized lands who *believe not*, in the proper and specific sense of that term. The promises of the Redeemer, and his work of redemption and retribution, lighted the hopes of natural Israel and lifted that nation above the other nations, which more or less caught its spirit of hope; and since the Redeemer's death and resurrection, and his outpouring of his spirit upon spiritual Israel, his church, a "little flock," has been the light of the world, which in a small degree has uplifted the civilized nations to a semi-decency which in many is but a thin veneer of "form of godliness."

The second answer deserves careful scrutiny, for it is an evasion instead of an answer. It is evident that the answer should not have been Yes, but *No, I do not believe in the fall as related in the Bible*. Adherence to the theory of Evolution forces this man, and everyone else who reasons logically, to deny the plain Bible narrative—not only the Genesis account but also the New Testament records, and to falsely teach that Adam and Eve were myths, that they never existed, that the record is merely an allegory—a fable. What, then, did our Savior mean when he said that he "came to seek and to save that which was lost," and to "give himself a ransom for all"? (Matt. 18:11; 1 Tim. 2:6) What did the Apostle Peter and all the holy prophets mean when they spoke of the "*restitution of all things*" if our race did not fall and need restitution? (Acts 3:19-21) What did the Apostle Paul mean when he said, "*In Adam all die*," and "*By one man's disobedience*," and "*As by a man came death*," and "*The first man was made a living soul*"? If the Bible record respecting Adam is unreliable we have no record of a first man, and if unreliable in this matter it could not be depended on at all. If left without an Adam and a fall and a Paradise lost we should have no use for a restitution, and a Paradise restored, by a Redeemer. If no fall no sin, and no need of redemption.

Thank God for the good hope set before us in the Gospel, so different from the Evolution delusion. "This hope we have as an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast," and reasonable and consistent and Scriptural in every particular. It acknowledges the fall, the need of the redemption accomplished by our Lord at Calvary, and the church's need of full deliverance from sin and death in the first resurrection, and the world's need of the great Millennial kingdom for its restitutional uplift opportunities for "the whole world."

Dr. Horton contradicts his first reply in his second. In the first he says, "Man is here with his face towards the goal,"

which implies that man is doing finely along Evolution lines; but he contradicts this in his second, saying—"We [including himself] disobey and know it, reach out our hands and, in strange inflation of our little godless minds, we set up ourselves, and by self-exaltation are ruined because we have left our God."—Where, then, is the fact toward the goal and the evolutionary power in man? Does not the gentleman's reasoning rather confirm the Apostle's words than his own?—See Rom. 1:21-29.

#### CHURCH COMMUNISM ARGUMENTS

An exchange says:—

"We declare that the germs of divine communism were planted in the church nineteen hundred years ago, and that in the harvest of the dispensation, divine communism must characterize the economics of those who awake to a realization of the genuine science of the Lord's coming. He who denies the principles of communism as it obtained in the early church in obedience to the law of love to the neighbor, cannot consistently lay claim to acceptance of the apostolic doctrines and practices."

\* \* \*

We consider that the writer of the above item erred in saying that the germs of communism were planted nineteen centuries ago. Such of those germs as were proper for man were planted six thousand years ago, when God created man perfect, in his own image. The conditions resulting from the fall made communism impossible—injurious, and therefore unwise. The Lord's people, in proportion as they become heavenly minded, should be better prepared than others for a return to proper communism; but experience teaches what the Apostle Paul proclaimed, namely, that the treasure of the new heart, the new mind, can exercise itself only through our earthen vessels—all of which are more or less twisted and cracked. "So that we cannot do the things that we would."

It is far from the truth to claim that our Lord and his disciples dwelt together on communistic lines. On the contrary, the very terms of discipleship were that Jesus should be the acknowledged Lord and Master. To his disciples Jesus' word was law. They certainly did not have a commission of authority. True, Judas was treasurer of the funds, not, however, by vote or general appointment, but by the Lord's permission: for the moneys contributed were given to Jesus (Luke 8:3) and not to the disciples. He voluntarily shared with them. Clearly, however, he personally cared for his mother, Mary; and evidently, too, his disciple John had separately a home and means of his own.—John 19:27.

After Pentecost, under the impulse of the new mind, the Lord's people evidently did attempt what every true Christian feels considerably drawn to, namely—a limited form of communism. But communism was not taught as proper Christian usage, and not one word can be found in the Bible inculcating it. It was purely a voluntary movement, which the apostles neither aided nor opposed, and which speedily proved itself impracticable under present conditions. The Lord permitted his people to experiment thus as a valuable lesson—teaching the need of the resurrection-change to transform their bodies.

When the lesson had been given the Lord permitted a fierce persecution to scatter the Jerusalem church, and we hear nothing more of Christian communism in the Bible. Quite the contrary. The Apostle writes to "them that are rich among you," and took up collections for the poor, and exhorted each Christian to lay aside for benevolent purposes according as the Lord had prospered him—showing thus that neither the labor nor its monetary result were considered common property. The exhortation to "do good until all men as we have opportunity, especially to the household of faith," and the exhortation that, seeing a brother have need, we should not content ourselves with giving him our good wishes but should share with him the gifts which we by God's grace enjoy,—these, and many other Scriptures we might cite, show clearly that communism was not practised and that the apostles did not improve such opportunities to inculcate or even commend communism. Doubtless many of God's blessings will be common to all men during the Millennium and after it;—yet this surely will be far from the anarchious kind of communism advocated by some today. The Millennial kingdom will be a monarchy—a theocracy. Similarly the heavenly kingdom is not communistic in government, for grades are recognized—angels, principalities and powers, etc. And, as now, in the church, the Apostle declares that God sets the members as it pleaseth him. So we find him teaching that after the first resurrection shall have brought the entire body of Christ to perfection of the divine nature, there will still be no communism of authority, but there shall be least and greatest in the kingdom, even as star differeth from star in glory.

#### HIGHER CRITICISM'S WIDE INFLUENCE

A German scholar and editor of a religious journal says:—

"We are at the beginning of a new epoch in the life of the church. The seventy-year war between mythology and theology in the domain of the Old Testament has seemingly ended in a complete defeat of the traditional views. The critical views practically control Protestant thought everywhere and have assumed international proportions. Not one university man in Germany holds to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and all make concessions to the newer views."

"And yet when a person coolly and deliberately looks at the so-called 'certain results' of the critical investigations of the last century and a half, what are these 'results'? Nothing else than the conclusion that most of the books of the Old Testament are literary frauds; that they do not correctly teach the historical development of the religion of Israel, and, to make matters worse, intentionally and purposely misrepresent this history, especially those books that have been 'revised' in harmony with the spirit of the Deuteronomist. The whole Mosaic code, in its real essence, at any rate, is held to be a later fabrication, and its claim to have been given in the wilderness is regarded as an historical falsehood. Its whole historical background, it is asserted, is a fabrication, and the Law is but the outcome of a struggle between the advocates of the local cults and the hierarchical tendencies of the Jerusalem priesthood."

"There is only one other religious book that, in its origin and development, can be compared with the Old Testament, as the critics regard it, and that is the Book of Mormon. A mere glance at this parallel must convince the earnest Christian that he can have no share in the radical criticism of the times. The strongest argument against the hypothesis is to state it in its simple and naked truthfulness."

#### "THE AWFUL PROBLEM OF FUTURE RETRIBUTION"

In the New York *Christian Advocate* Rev. G. Jackson treats a timely topic thus:—

"I close these brief notes on Methodist doctrine with a reference to the dark and awful problem of future retribution. In Dr. Dale's summary of the characteristic doctrines of the evangelical revival, 'those which its preachers were constantly reiterating, and on which they insisted most vehemently,' he names as the fourth and last, 'the eternal suffering to which they believed that those are destined who have heard the Christian Gospel in this life and rejected it.' He then goes on to point out in words which I could wish to transfer bodily to my own pages, the great change which the belief of large numbers of persons now belonging to evangelical churches has undergone in relation to this subject. There are some—their number is probably small—who have accepted what is commonly known as the theory of universal restoration, who believe, that is, that all men will certainly at last reach the blessedness and glory of eternal union with God. Others again there are—and it is well known that Dale himself was one of them—whose study of the New Testament has led them to the conclusion that men possess immortality only in Christ, and that consequently those in this world who have rejected him are destined to *eternal destruction*, to a *second death* from which there is no resurrection. Others again can reach no definite and positive position; they find in the words of Christ and his apostles apparently conflicting teaching. Such according to Dale, is the present position of the doctrine in our evangelical churches. How far are his words true of Methodism? That we have been greatly influenced by the modification of belief it is impossible to deny, though how far the change has gone it is not easy to say. So far as I am able to judge, dogmatic universalism has no place among us at all. A few, perhaps, especially since the publication of Dr. Joseph Agar Beet's work on 'The Last Things,' have been looking toward 'conditional immortality' for relief from the agonizing burden of the old belief. But the overwhelming majority of those to whom a restatement of their faith has become a necessity would probably prefer to class themselves amongst those who can reach no definite and positive conclusion. I am told on the highest authority that the late Dr. Moulton, who held an unrivalled position in Wesleyan Methodism as a saintly scholar, was wont in private to describe his own attitude as one of 'reverent agnosticism.' The phrase not inaptly describes the state of mind of multitudes of his younger brethren today. On the one hand, they can receive neither universal restoration nor conditional immortality, for they are resolved to be loyal to the New Testament, and they do not find either of these doctrines there. On the other hand, they dare not speak as did many of their fathers of the doom of the lost, for neither can they find warrant for this in the words either of Christ or his apostles. Therefore they are agnostics."

## CHURCH UNION IN NEW ZEALAND AND CANADA

A Canadian journal says:—

"Signs are not wanting that Christian religions await only the coming of a Morgan to be fused into a gigantic trust, if such an ill-omened word may be used to describe church union. New Zealand Presbyterians have taken the lead by appointing a committee to wait on the Methodists and Congregationalists

of that country to consider the merging of all three denominations. Encouraged by this example, the lay conference of the Methodist church at Winnipeg has passed a resolution heartily indorsing the action of the New Zealand workers and instructing a special committee to make inquiries with a view of definite proposals of a similar nature to Canadian Presbyterians and Congregationalists."

## A THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

The following, copied from the program for a debate arranged between the Editor of this Journal and a prominent Methodist minister of Allegheny City, will be self-explanatory:—

## HISTORY OF THE PROPOSITION

On March 10, 1903, Rev. E. L. Eaton, D. D., pastor North Avenue M. E. church, addressed a letter to Pastor C. T. Russell, of the Arch Street (Bible House) Chapel, in which he said:

"Believing that nothing helps so much to get at the exact truth of a fact or doctrine as a full and free discussion of it; and that any legitimate thing that will attract the attention and arouse the interest of those who are indifferent to Scriptural truth is commendable; I have thought that a public debate of some of those questions about which you and I differ, and which we both believe to be vital to the Christian system, would be of immense interest to the public, and perhaps of great spiritual profit to those who heard, provided that the discussions be carried on—as I feel sure they would be—in a Christian spirit and with moral and spiritual earnestness. Therefore I have decided to call your attention to the matter, and to inquire whether you would be willing to engage with me in a joint discussion, at some suitable time and place in this city.

"The questions which I have in mind, but which I have not exactly formulated, are concerning the following:

- "1—The Second Coming of Christ.
- "2—The Millennium.
- "3—Post-Mortem Probation.
- "4—State of the Dead Between Death and the Resurrection.
- "5—Eternal States of the Saved and the Lost.
- "6—The Doctrine of Salvation."

The Christian, brotherly spirit of the communication was responded to in like manner by Pastor Russell on March 12 in a letter as follows:

"I assure you that your courteous expressions and Christian sentiments are fully reciprocated by me. I agree with you that such a public discussion as you suggest—of our divergent views on the teachings of the Bible—ought to be profitable, stimulating to Bible study on our part as well as on the part of all Bible students hereabouts. I therefore accept your proposition, and join you in mutual assurances that the 'Golden Rule' shall be observed, which will insure Christian courtesy of the very highest standard."

Other engagements and appointments hindered an early consummation of arrangements, but on June 27 the gentlemen concerned appended their signatures to a joint letter embodying the general conditions which should regulate the discussion, viz.: that in debate the first speaker should have fifty minutes, the second speaker fifty minutes; and that each should have ten minutes for reply; that the meetings should be absolutely free to the public, and should be held in Carnegie Hall, Allegheny, on October 18, 20, 22, 27, 29, and November 1.

## THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

2 SAMUEL 6:4-16.—OCTOBER 11.

"Thy throne shall be established forever."—2 Sam. 7:16.

David, during the first six years of his reign over all Israel, was kept actively engaged in resisting the enemies of Israel and enlarging the borders of the nation, in harmony with the original divine grant. Having to a considerable extent accomplished these things, and having built for himself a palace in Jerusalem, the reverential elements of his nature noticed the inconsistency of his dwelling in a palace while the typical residence of Israel's great King, Jehovah, was but the Tabernacle tent. His reverential impulses promptly suggested the building of a temple to replace the Tabernacle, and properly enough he consulted the Prophet Nathan, who rejoiced in this manifestation of the King's loyalty to the Lord, and indorsed the program. That same night, however, the Lord gave the prophet a message for the King, which, although it showed

We bespeak the prayers of the dear friends of the Truth, that in connection with this opportunity for presenting the Scripture teaching concerning the wonderful plan of God we may have wisdom from above; and that the name and character of the Lord may be glorified.

## HOW TO SECURE REPORTS OF THE DEBATES

Anticipating your interest in the proposed discussions, we have negotiated with the leading Pittsburgh daily, *The Gazette*, to publish reports of each session in their issues of the following days.

Our arrangement follows:—

Eight copies of each issue containing the debate reports (with one copy each of the intermediate issues, as required by law to secure cheap postage) to one address, postpaid for 55 cents; or the same, with one year's subscription to *ZION'S WATCH TOWER*, for \$1.50. All remittances should be sent direct to the *WATCH TOWER* office.

Believing that many of the friends will consider these six reports desirable for circulating amongst their friends and neighbors we have felt no hesitation about guaranteeing *The Gazette* 1250 subscriptions. *Order at once*, as, otherwise, the number printed may not be sufficient to fill all orders.

appreciation of David's intentions, forbade their execution, explaining that the reason that the Lord's presence was manifested in a tent, and not a permanent structure, was not because the Lord had not thought of this, nor because others of his servants would not have been glad to have erected such a structure at his bidding, but because the divine plan was otherwise. The Tabernacle was for the time being preferred, for certain reasons not explained at the time. The Lord, however, did assure David that by and by he would have a permanent temple, and that David's successor and son should erect it.

The Lord's people may learn a valuable lesson from this incident. We are not to conclude that, because our plans and projects are reverential and designed to be for the glory of God, therefore they must have the divine approval. With spir-

itual Israel, as with David, it is frequently true that "My ways are not as your ways, nor my thoughts [plans] as your thoughts [plans]; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, saith the Lord." Those who are of David's disposition—"after God's own heart"—will not only consult with those whose judgment they should consider helpful, as David consulted with Nathan, but if subsequently the Lord rejects their best judgment, and does not coöperate in the execution of their plans, will do as David did in this instance: they will uncomplainingly acquiesce in the Lord's plans, and coöperate therewith, and thus further attest that they are of the kind the Lord loves to honor and call beloved. To these also the Lord will grant other special blessings and favors, as he did to David.

The spirit of David in this matter—his desire to honor the Lord and to build him a great house or temple—finds its parallel in the heart sentiments of every true Christian. We do not refer to those who merely take pleasure in erecting grand temples of stone, but specially to those whose ambition it would be to organize the church of the present time—to glory in its grandeur and completeness of organization and function and service for the Lord. Those not in the right condition of heart, heady, self-willed, confident that their good intentions must be pleasing to the Lord, have proceeded to build various structures, each claiming his to be the temple of the Lord. As they have neither sought nor received divine instruction on the subject, but are following their own ideals, there is necessarily considerable diversity in these buildings, each seeming to its builders to be the right, proper and appropriate temple of God. These temples now number hundreds, the larger and more imposing ones being the Roman Catholic temple, the Greek Catholic temple, the church of England temple, the Methodist temple, the Lutheran temple, the Presbyterian temple, the Baptist temple, the Congregational temple, etc., etc.

But a small class follow the example of David, and receive instruction from the Lord to the effect that the present is not the time for temple-building; that he could have built his temple heretofore, and found many willing to serve him in this respect, but that he prefers that his representation in the world in the present time shall be extremely simple and unostentatious. Such receive of the Lord assurances, however, that in his own time and way, under a succeeding form of the Kingdom, a much more glorious temple shall be constituted than would be possible for us to build at the present time—an enduring temple which shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. All who are of the Davidic character, of the disposition *beloved of the Father*—acceptable members of his dear, beloved Son—will, as soon as they learn of the divine purpose, promptly submit themselves, and coöperate in the divine plan. That plan in the type was that David, as the man of war, battling for the right, and severely tried and disciplined, should represent the saints of God in the present militant condition, warring with the world, the flesh and the devil, and becoming in their own hearts and faith strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. According to the same type it is the mission of the present time to prepare the gold, silver and precious things for the future temple—ready for its construction. In the type these were literal things, but in the antitype, as the Apostle shows, the Lord's saints are the gold, silver and precious stones, which very shortly now, in the establishment of the Millennial kingdom, will be all thoroughly organized on the plane of glory, honor and immortality, and filled eternally with the life and glory of the Father. As David and his work of preparing for the temple, typifies the church in this present time, and our work of preparing ourselves and each other for the glories to follow, so Solomon's kingdom which followed represents the kingdom of the glorified Christ—the real Kingdom, of which the present is but the embryo, and the construction of Solomon's Temple typifies the resurrection of the church, in which all the members shall come together in glorious completeness, in the morning of the Millennial day. "Weeping may endure for a night [in connection with our fightings with foes without and within, and suffering for righteousness' sake], but joy cometh in the morning [when that which is perfect shall have come, and when that which is in part shall have been done away]." (Psa. 30:5) "God shall help her [the church, the bride of Christ], and that right early"—in the morning.—Psa. 46:5.

In connection with this refusal of David's proposition the Lord gave him very gracious encouragement, reminding him that every step of his onward way had been guided from on high, and that it was because he had faithfully looked to the Lord as his guide and counsellor that he had now reached the degree of development and relationship to the Lord and to the kingdom occupied. So the Lord encourages all who are of this David class in spiritual Israel today. All who are look-

ing to the Lord, and hearkening to his Word, are reminded that the Lord is attending to his own work in his own way, and that it is a far superior way to anything which we could devise. We are pointed to the low estate we occupied on the animal plane, and how the Lord by his grace has advanced us step by step, until now we are children of God, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord, if so be that we suffer with him. It is for us to appreciate the lesson of past experiences, and to trust that he who took us from the horrible pit and the miry clay, and placed our feet upon the rock, and put the new song into our mouths, is able to bless us still further, and that in proportion as we hearken to his Word, through his prophet, the Scriptures.

The succeeding verses of the lesson mingle and commingle the natural blessings upon David and his literal posterity and upon natural Israel, with the still greater blessings that are to uplift all who will come into covenant relationship with God through the antitypical Son of David, the glorified Christ and his Millennial kingdom. Vs. 10 undoubtedly had a measurable fulfilment in literal Israel, in that for several hundred years they remained in their own land, under their own covenant—an experience very different from that preceding under the rule of the Judges. But the time when the Lord will plant them, and when they shall be moved no more and afflicted no more by the wicked, must apply to the grander restoration of the future, when, as he has promised, he will gather them out of all nations and peoples whither they are now scattered, and bring them into their own land. This later prophecy is in full agreement with the one made to David by Nathan. Then, as another Scripture declares, the Lord will restore to Israel her lawgivers as at the first, and her judges as at the beginning. Then it will be, too, that the house of David will be firmly established in great David's greater Son, the glorified Christ. Here the promises to the natural and to the spiritual seeds are more or less intertwined, just as they were in the Abrahamic promise. The seed of Abraham was both an earthly seed and a heavenly, as the sand of the sea and as the stars of heaven—the natural seed and the spiritual—and as the Apostle declares, the promise is sure to both of these, its proper part to each.—Rom. 4:16. Compare Rom. 11:25-32.

David's throne was perpetual through the line of Solomon down to Zedekiah, and when the Lord rent the kingdom from the hands of Zedekiah he did not give it to another family, but proclaimed an interregnum—a suspension of David's kingdom, which might not go to another. The language of the prophecy concerning Zedekiah is, "O thou profane and wicked prince, whose time is come that iniquity should have an end: remove the diadem, take off the crown; this shall no more be the same. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, until he come whose right it is, and I will give it unto him." (Ezek. 21:27) There has been no King of Israel, from Zedekiah's day to the present—the overturning of the kingdom has been very thorough. The kings who reigned over Israel at the time of the first advent, and previously and subsequently, were not Israelitish kings, nor of Israelitish birth, but were appointees of Gentile governments, which, from Zedekiah's day to the present, have trodden under foot the sacred land. The fulfilment of this promise to David is nevertheless secure, sure as the word and oath of the Almighty; and we who were by nature Gentiles, but who have been betrothed to Abraham's great Son and David's great Son and Lord, are still looking forward to and praying and patiently waiting for the fulfilment of this promise, saying, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"—even as our Lord taught us to do. As soon as this antitypical David, "Beloved," shall have assumed the reigns of government at the time appointed of the Father, he, as the antitype also of Solomon, on the natural plane, will build the Lord's house, and his throne shall be established forever—for it is the throne of the kingdom of Jehovah: and although in its mediatorial sense it will terminate at the close of the Millennial age, yet in a still higher sense it will continue to all eternity, because David's Son and Lord has been associated with the Father in his throne, and his bride shall be with him where he is, and share his glory, according to his promise.

Much of this promise was applicable to Solomon. The kingdom of David, or rather the kingdom of the Lord, was established in the hands of Solomon. He did build a typical house or temple in the name of the Lord. God did deal with him as with a son, chastening his iniquity, yet continuing his mercy with him: he did not suffer the kingly power to depart from David's natural seed, as he took it from Saul.

The 14th verse may properly be applied to those begotten of the Spirit to be Sons of God and joint-heirs in the coming kingdom. "For what son is he that the Father chasteneth not?" Even the Head of the body, although in him there was



no sin, needed the experiences called chastisements for his preparation, for his great position in the coming kingdom. Indeed, he bore the stripes of the children of men, as the Prophet declares, and we, as members of his body, will not be

spared by the Father from the needed corrections in righteousness, which would make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light—so long as we receive them in the spirit of sonship, seeking to know and to do the Father's will.

## THE JOYS OF GOD'S FORGIVING LOVE

PSALM 32.—OCTOBER 25.

*"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."*

This Psalm will be quickly recognized as King David's exultant acknowledgment of God's forgiveness of his sins against Uriah. The first verse is the keynote of the entire Psalm. Verses 3-5 record the King's mental distress during the period in which his sins had come as a cloud between him and the sunshine of divine favor which he previously had enjoyed. His distress of mind naturally affected his physical health to such an extent that all of life's duties became burdensome and practically all of its pleasures died. In this fact we perceive that the King was far from the condition of a hardened criminal. His heart had been set for right and for the Lord, and was still set in that direction, even though under the temptation he had grossly violated the simplest laws of justice and friendship. The fact that he had gnawings of conscience, that his soul was not at ease under the burden of divine disapproval, were the hopeful signs in the case.

Since David was not a wilful sinner—since he did not at heart approve and rejoice in sin, but despised it, mourned for it—the Lord very graciously guided his affairs so that the lesson became more and more severe to him, until finally he could not bear it longer. Then, when the boil of contrition was fully ripe, the Lord sent his message through Nathan the Prophet to lance it, and his sharp reproof and severe sentence marked the culmination of the King's terrible mental distress and brought him to the point of confession to God and before the nation—to the point of prayer for divine forgiveness and restoration of divine favor, without which he realized that his agony of mind would continue.

The King's prayers were heard—God was gracious to him, his transgression was forgiven, his sin was covered, his iniquity was no longer imputed to him, because his heart was repentant—in it there was no guile. His repentance was sincere, full, thorough. The Psalmist exultingly sings of his own restoration to divine favor, and, doubtless under divine guidance, represented his as being a sample or illustration of what God is willing to do for all who similarly have sincere sorrow for sin, true repentance, who confess their faults and make fresh acknowledgment of their faith. It is safe to say that in thousands of God's people, not only in David's own nation but in every nation, kindred, people and tongue familiar with God's Word, the King's experiences and the lessons of this Psalm, showing his reconciliation with God and the exercise of divine favor toward him, have inspired faith and brought peace and rest to those cast down through weaknesses of the flesh—some of them as grievous or more so, if possible, than David's, and some of them for sins less great in the sight of men but realized as being great in the sight of God—sufficient to separate the sinner and his Lord.

As a picture or illustration this does not specially relate to the sinner coming from the alien world and seeking entrance into God's family: it rather represents one who had already enjoyed divine favor and lost it—one who had gotten from the light into darkness. The Scriptures clearly point out to us that even after we have become children of God it is possible to "fall away." They show us two classes of those who fall. One class is described in Heb. 6:4-7; 10:26-31. These we may have no hope for, because at heart they have become sympathetic with sin; they are wilful sinners, as the Apostle here describes. It would not be appropriate that God should exercise his mercy toward those who, after having come to a clear knowledge of the Truth, wilfully, preferably, approvingly delight in sin. The only thing remaining for these, as the Apostle declares, is judgment which will devour them as adversaries of God and adversaries of righteousness. Of this class the Apostle declares, "There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it."—1 John 5:16.

It is of the second class that the Apostle says there is a sin not unto death—one which may be repented of, which may be forgiven, and out of which the transgressor may come with valuable lessons which may ultimately result in blessings of knowledge and experience which will be helpful to him in future conflicts and triumphs. David's sin was of this latter class—not wilful, not approved by him, but of the class of sins referred to by the Apostle when he says, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 2:1) Of the same class of sins the Apostle

says, "He is just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," and again, "Though he fall yet shall he not be utterly cast down." The fact is that transgression that is wilful and approved by the heart means an utter fall from divine favor in every sense of the word, while stumbling into sin contrary to the will, through weakness of the flesh and temptation, is to be considered a stumbling from which there is every hope of recovery.

Some one will perhaps argue that practically every transgression is a wilful one, because the Lord's people, however weak in body, have still the power to will right if they would. Such are inclined at times to accuse themselves of wilful sin, and to fear that they are under the ban of the second death. We point, however, to David's case as an illustration of what is not esteemed of the Lord to be a wilful sin. King David deliberately planned for days and weeks and months in connection with his transgression. It cannot be denied that there was a measure of wilfulness in it, but there was a measure of something else also: namely, of weakness of the flesh, inherited as a member of the race from father Adam. Only divine judgment could clearly, distinctly discern how much of David's sin should properly be accredited to wilfulness and how much to weakness. That it was not wholly weakness or ignorance is evident, and that it was not wholly wilfulness is equally evident. It was therefore what we might term a mixed sin. The proof that it was not wholly wilful is found in the fact that David's conscience afterward, before being reproved by the Lord through the Prophet, recognized his sin and realized the barrier which it had raised between the Lord and his soul. Had the sin been wilful, instead of feeling sorrow and contrition the King would have felt disposed to go on in the course of sin still farther, and would have had no longings for divine forgiveness and reconciliation. His desires for these prove to us that, although he had deviated so grievously from the proper paths, his heart, his will, was still on the side of the Lord and of righteousness. Let this serve as a lesson and illustration for all who have fallen into sin and who long for divine forgiveness and reconciliation. Let such accept the mercy of the Lord by faith and rejoice therein as did King David. Let them remember that those who have sinned the sin unto death it is impossible to renew again unto repentance—impossible to bring them back to a condition where they would be truly contrite and repentant for their evil course.

True repentance implies a rectification of the wrong to the extent of one's ability. David's sin being a public one, known to the nation, it was appropriate that the repentance should be as public as was the sin, and we have reason to believe that David would not have received restoration to divine favor had he not been thoroughgoing in his confession and his endeavors to make good the wrong he had done. His course had led some to blaspheme God's name (2 Sam. 12:14), and it was appropriate that his repentance should, so far as possible, offset this. And so the story of David's repentance has come down the ages with the story of his crime; and while the one has given occasion to blasphemers, the other has given hope and encouragement to many overtaken in faults, who, like David, at heart were loyal to the Lord.

We are to distinguish sharply between forgiveness of sin and remission of penalties. In this case we see that David's sin was forgiven, yet the punishment which the Prophet had foretold came upon him in due time. Thus we see that forgiveness here stands not for judicial forgiveness, which would have exonerated the forgiven one from all punishment, but it stands merely for the removal of divine disfavor which had come upon the King as one of the results of his transgression. We are to notice also that the King had not in his mind the thought of escaping the punishment which God had foretold and described; his joy was in respect to the restoration of communion between himself and the Lord—the removal of the sin-born cloud which had hidden from him for a time the light of the divine countenance, the smile of heaven, the fellowship of God. And so it will be today with all who, falling into sin wilfully, repent thereof and seek a renewal of the fellowship of the Father and of the Son from the right standpoint. Their moving desire will not be simply escape from punishment, but

specially a renewal of communion of soul broken by transgression. It is in full accord with this that the new creation at the present time rejoices in forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with the Father through the Son, yet live under practically the same conditions as the world, subject to the aches, pains, trials, difficulties and disappointments which belong in general to the fallen race because of original sin. The blessings of our new relationship to God consist not in our release from the burdens and difficulties of the groaning creation, but in the realization that we are no longer under divine condemnation, **no longer children of wrath** even as others, but brought nigh unto God in fellowship and communion through the blood of Christ. Our hope of deliverance from the burdens which afflict the whole groaning creation are centered in the promised kingdom blessings at the second advent of our Lord. Inspired by these hopes and promises we sorrow not as do others, but are enabled to rejoice in tribulation and to wait patiently for the Lord's time and for the Lord's way—the first resurrection.

This thought, namely, that in the present time our sins are merely covered from divine notice through the merit of our Lord,—that they are merely forgiven or given over or set aside, are hidden and not actually *blotted out*—is very clearly stated by the Apostle Peter (Acts 3:19-21) when, preaching under the influence of the holy spirit, he declared that his hearers should repent and be converted to the Lord, so that their sins might be blotted out when the times of refreshing should come—the times of restitution—the Millennial age and kingdom.

In that glorious Millennial day the church, now reconciled, will first pass inspection, and those counted worthy will share in the first resurrection, and the bodies they will then receive will be perfect, without blemish and without flaw—very different—from the mortal bodies of the present time, all of which are more or less marred by sin, mentally and physically. The receiving of the new bodies perfected will mean that all the blemishes, all the marks of sin for this class, were blotted out in the tomb, in the flesh, their spiritual bodies being perfect, even as it is written of this first resurrection class: "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown an animal body, it is raised a spiritual body."

The world not having received reconciliation, not having received forgiveness of sins, will not receive the blotting out of sins in the Millennial morning. The great blessing that will come to the world of mankind as distinguished from the church, the body of Christ, the little flock, the elect of the present time, will be the blessing of forgiveness—full, free. The great atonement day (the Gospel age) will then have closed, its better sacrifices will all then be in the past, its blood of atonement will then have been presented before the Father and will have been accepted on behalf of the whole world. As a result of this acceptance, the divine forgiveness will reach the whole world through Christ—a remission of the sentence pronounced upon the world in the person of Adam. This is specifically stated by the Apostle, saying, "As by the offence of one judgment [sentence] came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift [will come] upon all men unto justification of life." (Rom. 5:18) But as forgiveness to David did not mean a repudiation of such penalties as were due him because of the measure of wilfulness contained in his sins, and as forgiveness in this Gospel age to the church does not mean an immediate release from the penalties that are upon the race, so likewise the forgiveness of the world's sins at the dawn of the Millennium and the beginning of Messiah's reign will not mean the removal of all the marks of sin, the disabilities, death conditions, which come upon all men partly through their own wrong doing. As with the church now, forgiveness

of the sins means a covering of those sins, that we may be treated as though we were not sinners: so with the world in the next age—the forgiveness of the world's sins will mean that thenceforth Christ stands for the whole world before God as the covering of their sins, and that on account of the sacrifice of everlasting death upon them is annulled. The work of Christ and of the Millennial kingdom will be to lift up all who will of the world of mankind to the full perfection of their human nature, so that at the close of that age they may be perfect and entire as human beings. The work of the Millennial age will therefore be a work of blotting out sins—blotting out the evidences and traces of sin in body and mind. The weaknesses and impairments which sin has brought upon humanity will be thus overcome, and it is for this reason that that age is called the times of restitution, the times in which gradually the original likeness of God will be brought back to all those who will accept the divine favor through the great redemption.

In verse six King David suggests that his own experience should be helpful to others who at heart were godly—desiring God's way of righteousness, but who had stumbled in the way. He advises that they pray to the Lord promptly—that they should seek him while he may be found. David's own experiences seemed to teach him that every day removed him farther and farther from fellowship with the Lord. His exhortation is that in order that the floods of great waters of troubles should not reach such an one, he would be spared much by going promptly to the throne of heavenly grace to make confession and to obtain mercy and grace to help in future times of need.

In verse seven the King reverts to his own experiences and how he had found peace in the Lord—a hiding-place in which he could have rest; and although he knew to look forward to the prescribed punishments, his heart now being in fellowship with the Lord he could realize that the Lord's presence would be with him in those punishments and preserve him in that trouble, and that he would be, so to speak, enabled to hear the heavenly messengers singing songs of his deliverance even whilst in his affliction.

The concluding verses of the Psalm represent the Lord as the speaker, instructing David and all of his people who, like David, desire the Lord's guidance and feel wretched and troubled when any earth-born cloud intervenes between the Lord and their souls. The Lord engages to be the teacher, the instructor of all such; he will overrule their affairs, he will make all things to work together for good. Even their stumblings shall not prove disastrous; but because they maintain the spirit of devotion to the Lord and to the principles of righteousness, he will make even their missteps to become valuable lessons, that they may be henceforth less liable to stumble, and learn to look unto the Lord and to be guided in their goings by his eye.

Those whom the Lord instructs, and who will receive his instruction, will not be like the horse or mule that must be turned and guided by force. Their hearts will be so in sympathy with the Lord that he can deal with them otherwise, to their blessing and joy. The wicked shall have their sorrows, but the Lord's people will not be counted in among these; for his mercy shall be with them, restoring their souls. Therefore this class, through the Lord's mercy, will be counted righteous—not that they were righteous of themselves, but counted righteous through the divine provision in Christ. These may be glad in the Lord, though they could not be glad in themselves. These, because upright in heart even though prone to sin and full of weaknesses according to the flesh, may be brought off conquerors through him who loved us and bought us with his precious blood—may shout for joy as they realize the abundance of the divine provision "for the propitiation of our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."—1 John 2:2.

## ABSALOM'S SHAMEFUL DISLOYALTY

2 SAM. 15:1-12.—NOVEMBER 1.

GOLDEN TEXT:—"Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."—Ex. 20:12.

The closing years of King David's life included a series of very trying experiences, which, however, under the Lord's providential care, apparently worked out for him a ripeness of heart and character exhibited to us in the Psalms of his later writing. These disastrous experiences date from the time of his sin, and to a considerable extent they were used of the Lord as punishments for that sin. Although in the case of Absalom's rebellion we may trace the evil which there culminated to circumstances which occurred long previous to

David's sin, we are also to remember that it was quite in the Lord's power to have shielded the King so as to have prevented the success of Absalom's deceitful machinations. Amongst these earlier influences may be mentioned David's marriage to Absalom's mother, who was not a Jewess but a foreigner, the daughter of a heathen king. The counsel of the Lord is to the effect that his people should not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, and this counsel applied to the typical Israelite as it still applies to spiritual Israel. This disre-

gard of the divine wisdom was sure to produce unfavorable results in some manner at some time. Children born to such a mismatched marriage are sure to inherit certain elements of character and disposition from the unbelieving parent which will eventually show themselves. In the story of Absalom we see an illustration of this. His vanity, insubordination, disloyalty, went hand in hand with an ambition which seemed to hesitate at nothing. It killed a half-brother who stood between himself and the throne, and later on stimulated a usurpation of his father's throne, and the seeking of his father's life.

Absalom is a distinguished example of dishonor to a father, and the resultant cutting off in the prime of life. The story of his unfilial conduct is told in this lesson. For the murder of his half-brother under provocation he fled from his father's dominions, and was three years an exile in the king's (his grandfather's) country. Then in intrigues in official circles his father's love for him was prevailed upon to such an extent as permitted his return to his home land, and eventually to all the privileges of the heir apparent to the throne. It is at this time that our lesson opens. The young man, remarkable for his handsome appearance, introduced a custom from his grandfather's court, a custom which still prevails in Egypt, namely, that a prince should have a special chariot and a bodyguard of fifty trained men. King David seems to have had so much love for his son that he practically let him have his own way in these matters. The people were pleased with the display, etc., of royalty in the person of their prince, and for several years a great and sobering change had come over the King, who was also advancing in years and who no longer showed himself amongst his people as much as formerly.

The vain young prince was quick to see that his spectacular course pleased the people, and quite probably he heard that his young brother Solomon was David's choice for his successor in the kingdom, and he concluded to make a bid for the royal honors of his father. His method was a crafty one: he would steal the hearts of the people from his father to himself. He had no filial affection; only selfish ambition is manifested in his course. He would use his father's indulgence, which had shielded him from the penalty of his crime, to undermine his father's influence. Surely, if it is wrong to render evil for evil, it is a despicable crime to render evil for good—to a father or a friend or to anyone.

The King in these days acted as a superior court, so that cases not satisfactorily adjudicated before the regular judges were appealed to him. As the nation grew these cases of appeal became more and more numerous, and doubtless the King's advancing age and his greater attention to religious things, writing of Psalms, etc., interfered to some extent with his conduct of this court business. Absalom perceived all this and turned it to his own account. Meeting those persons who had appeals and who were delayed, he expressed sympathy for them, assuring them that if he were a judge in their case justice would be speedily meted out—of course implying that his hearer had justice on his side and would therefore be pleased with the results. As a prince it was the order of that day that he should receive homage from the people of the realm, and feigning a love and humility which he evidently did not really feel, he lifted up and kissed these people. A royal kiss would be a matter to be boasted of. To have the fellowship, nay the affection, of a prince would mean to many a complete perversion of their judgment and a binding of them to him as his obedient servants.

Not only was this conduct unfilial, dishonoring to his parent, but it would have been disloyal to any ruler, ignoble toward any benefactor. Indeed the word "stole" is none too strong. In stealing the hearts of the people the theft was not less, but even greater, than if he had stolen money or merchandise. There is a point of morality here which is but faintly discerned by many in our day. We regret to be forced to believe that quite a good many are very willing to steal the affections of another and to misrepresent another to their own advantage. The Lord's people of the new creation need continually to be on their guard against any such tendency in their flesh, which might disguise itself so that its real character would not be discerned readily by the new mind. The Golden Rule should be applied by the saints to all the affairs of life every day. It is a safe rule, and those who use it freely and are obedient to it will assuredly grow in the fruits of the spirit, all of which are branches of the one great spirit of Love.

This conspiracy against his father may be considered as having begun immediately on Absalom's return from exile, or as dating from his full acceptance back to fellowship with his father and a princely position. In the latter case it was four years in progress, in the former case six years. When he con-

sidered that matters were properly ripe for action, in order not to excite the suspicion of the King or others he asked of the King permission to go to Hebron, there to offer a great sacrifice unto the Lord in harmony with a vow made years before, and the occasion was thus made so important that the taking with him of many of the chief men of the army and of the city would not be considered remarkable, but rather an honor to the King through his son.

Meantime spies had been sent throughout the twelve tribes, and trumpeters were posted in various quarters, so that when the appropriate time would come and Absalom should proclaim himself king at Hebron, these trumpeters, being heard by others, the whole line of trumpeters throughout the twelve tribes would sound almost simultaneously, and the spies in Absalom's secret service as well as the trumpeters would explain the meaning of this to be that Absalom was now king. The people, who had learned to love Absalom because of his mock meekness, would thus gain the impression that the revolution of the kingdom was complete; that King David was certainly thoroughly vanquished, and that their personal prosperity with the new king would depend upon the prompt manifestation of their loyalty to his cause. The matter worked remarkably well, and as a result practically the entire nation was turned to Absalom in a day.

Some of those who went from Jerusalem to Hebron were totally ignorant of the use that was being made of them, yet their influential names being associated with Absalom would affect the populace; and they in turn, being with him and favored by him as his friends, and their future being dependent upon his grace, had everything to gain by adherence to his cause and everything to lose by its repudiation.

The conspiracy was successful to a degree that could scarcely have been anticipated. Practically the whole nation gave allegiance to Absalom, and that in so outward and marked a manner that it was necessary for them subsequently, after his defeat and death, to publicly request the King to return to the head of the government of all the tribes. If we wonder that a nation should so quickly forget the valuable services of so eminent a ruler, to whom it owed so much of its prosperity, let us remember that the King's confession would not be viewed by the populace as it is now viewed by God's holy ones. Doubtless some appreciated him in a measure, but more would disesteem him for "showing the white feather," and many would be inclined to consider him an "old hypocrite." His seclusion during those eleven years and his accumulation of treasure for the building of the Temple—perhaps involving taxes upon the people—could all have been viewed from an evil standpoint and have assisted in his unpopularity. It is the fortune of all of the Lord's people to be misunderstood by the worldly, even when conduct and words and intentions are the very best. How careful, then, we all should be to walk circumspectly, and to avoid every appearance of evil!

Here, too, we may have an illustration of how God is able to *overrule* the affairs of the world in such a manner as to execute his designs without interfering with the free agency of any. Had it not been for David's sin and the penalty prescribed for it, Absalom might have had the same evil designs upon the kingdom,—might have made the same effort to accomplish his designs; but the Lord would not have permitted the matter to reach so successful a climax. An example of this is found in the subsequent attempt by a younger brother of Absalom to take the throne. He proceeded in many respects as Absalom did and under more favorable conditions, in that at that time the King had grown quite feeble with age and was unable to administer the interests of the kingdom personally or to take the field in battle. However, in due time the Lord brought the matter to the attention of David, so that the revolt was nipped in the bud before it had time to take effect, and Solomon instead of Adonijah was anointed king.

Just so it is with the Lord's people today. Conspiracies may arise to threaten the interests of the truth, but the Lord is at the helm, and will permit these to go no further than in his judgment is wise—only so far as they will work for the Lord's glory and the accomplishment of his plans, for the instruction and disciplining of his people, and for the sifting out of those who at heart are enemies of the cause. The general lesson for us is confidence in the great King of kings and Lord of lords; implicit obedience to him and loyalty to the principles of his government; the law of love in our dealings with all the true Israel of God and with mankind in general. The Lord is able and willing to make the things which would seem to harm us work out for our everlasting good and work disastrously to those who essay the injury of his people and his cause.

The Golden Text is well illustrated in our lesson. Absa-