

readers understood very well that they came in under the Sarah Covenant. But certain Judaizing teachers insisted that they must be under the Hagar Covenant, as well as under the Sarah Covenant. And this is what the Apostle is disputing. He is making clear that the (Hagar) Law Covenant would not continue, but perish, and that, in God's due time, he would provide a New Covenant to take its place with Israel.

(5) It was necessary that Jews be redeemed from the "dead works" of the old Law Covenant and that a New one be made for them by Christ—Head and members. The old one was sealed by the blood of bulls and goats, but the New one by "better sacrifices." Antitypically the blood of the bullock has been offered, and soon that of the goat will be presented.—Heb. 9:14-23.

(6) "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now, where remission of sins is, there is no more offering for sin." (Heb. 10:16-18) The Apostle is arguing along general lines. He would have his hearers understand that when an acceptable sacrifice has been offered to God for sins, the transaction is a closed one, and the sacrifice needs no repetition. He shows that this will be so in the future for the world. When the "better sacrifices," sealing the New Covenant, shall have been offered to God by our Redeemer, and accepted by him, it will mean the cancellation of all condemnation. On the strength of this work for the future the Apostle urges that we, the body of Christ, whose sins have been atoned for by our Lord, the first sacrifice of the Day of Atonement (in the type the bullock), may count that our sins are completely cancelled, and will be remembered against us no more. "For by one offering he (Christ) hath perfected forever them that are sanctified"; all justified by faith, who proceed to full consecration and sanctification. If numbered amongst the sanctified, we may know that our sins are completely obliterated from the divine record, so far as justice is concerned, and that we have entered upon a new record as New Creatures and will be held accountable only for trespasses against our covenant to the Lord, our vow—by which we became members of the Christ, the Seed of Abraham, and heirs of the great (Sarah) Covenant of Grace.

(7) "For this is my Covenant to them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the Gospel they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the elect, they are beloved for the fathers' sake." (Rom. 11:27, 28) There is no room to doubt that the Apostle here is referring to Israel's covenant, the New Covenant, which God will make with them after this Gospel

Day. The Apostle says the covenant will be made when, or at the time that the Lord will "take away their sins." That time has not yet come. Israel is still under divine condemnation, though we are now privileged to speak comfortably unto them and to assure them that the time for their deliverance is nigh, the time when the Mediator of the New Covenant will have taken on the last members of the spirit body, the Gospel church, "changed" by the power of the first resurrection; the time when he will mediate that New Covenant, satisfy the demands of divine justice on behalf of the world, as he already has satisfied it on behalf of the church. Then he will become, as previously intended and declared, the great Mediator of the New Covenant between God and mankind in general—the church being the exception, under the Covenant of Grace. Then will he begin his Millennial kingdom: "For he must reign until he shall have put all enemies under his feet, and the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Then all who drank of his "cup," the blood [sacrifice] of the New Covenant, as members of the spiritual seed, will reign with him.—Gal. 3:29.

(8) "But ye are approached unto Mt. Zion, . . . to the New Jerusalem, . . . to the general assembly and church of the firstborns, . . . and to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant and to the blood of sprinkling." (Heb. 12:24) Here spiritual Israel is pictured as an army marching and the things at the farther end are seen and to be reached. Jesus reached the end of the way long ago, but the church of firstborns is not there yet. Jesus is the Mediator, but he has accepted the church as his bride, his body, and waits for her arrival. The picture shows that the New Law Covenant will be established as the old Law Covenant was, only on a higher plane and through a greater Mediator and by better sacrifices.—Acts 3:23.

Not one of these references to the New Covenant makes the slightest suggestion that it is applicable to the church. A reference to the original prophecy from which the Apostle quotes shows that it could not apply to the church, for we there read that the Lord "will take away their stony hearts out of the flesh, and give them an heart of flesh." This is exactly the restitution work which will begin with Israel and extend to all the families of the earth, but it is not at all the work of this Gospel age, which is far higher. The Lord does not give the "little flock" hearts of flesh, but, justified by faith, allows them to sacrifice the flesh, and begets them to a new nature, the glorious Seed of Abraham, through which all the families of the earth shall be blessed, by the inauguration of the New Covenant, sealed, made operative by the merit of the blood of Christ.

VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER

When our friends of various denominations solicit funds for missionary efforts they exhibit a chart showing the heathen world in black and the Christian nations in white and remind us that of the 90,000 human beings dying every twenty-four hours, three-fourths are heathens going down into hopeless despair, eternal torment being understood, though not directly expressed. We concede to them that the heathen are not fit for heaven and that since only the saintly, perfected in intention and character, however imperfect in works, will enter the heavenly state, these heathen certainly will not be received there. But we remind them also that the same is true of the vast majority of people in Christian lands. If readiness for heaven signifies saintliness of character and holiness of will, surely but a fragment of the race, a "little flock," is ready for it. If, as claimed, eternal torment is the only alternative, then surely the creation of our world, the creation of the human family, was a serious error, for the entering into heaven of only one in 10,000 would be far too expensive a proposition to be approved by either justice or wisdom or love.

When our friends endeavor to stimulate their flagging zeal and to hope for the speedy conversion of the world, they point to the figures 400,000,000 as representing Christians and tell us that they are about to "storm the heathen world for Jesus." We admire their zeal; we appreciate their earnestness. We love them for their love of the Lord and humanity; but we point out to them that while it is true that there are twice as many Christians in heathen lands as there were centuries ago, it is also true that there are twice as many heathen as a century ago. There were 600,000,000 heathen in 1800 A. D. and 120,000,000 in 1900 A. D. We ask them how long it would require at this rate to convert the world to Christianity and point them to the better hope, the Bible hope of the second coming of our Lord and his establishment of the heavenly kingdom, his

binding of Satan and his reign with his elect church for a thousand years, for the uplifting of Adam and his race out of mental, moral and physical degradation and death. We point them to the fact that this fall, this degradation, this dying, was the result of Adam's sin, that our Lord Jesus was made flesh that he, "by the grace of God, should taste death for every man."

We assure them that according to the Scriptures, the redemption of all accomplished by Jesus, who was the ransom price, was paid at Calvary, and that an opportunity for deliverance from the power of sin and death was thus guaranteed. We assure them that it is to this end that God, during this Gospel age, has been selecting a "little flock," the church; that as the body of Christ these might be with him in his kingdom and share his glorious work of uplifting mankind.

Alas! how few have the ear to hear this message. (Acts 3:19-21) Instead they seem to be angry with us that we point out to them the futility of their hopes and the more rational, the more Scriptural hope set before us in the Gospel. The reason for this seems to be a reverence for churchianity and worship of the creeds and hopes which have come down to us from the dark ages.

They tell us that the accumulated experiences of the past will now enable them to almost work miracles upon the heathen and that if they can but collect money enough, the thing shall be promptly done. Missionary movements are now going on throughout the United States, Canada and Great Britain amongst the college students, laymen and others. Great things are promised, of money and ambitious hearts.

But again we point out the futility of all this. They can never convert the heathen. We are not opposed to missions. God forbid! We are glad that noble men and women self-sacrificingly take up the work of teaching civilization in hea-

then lands. It is well that heathen children should be taught to spell and read and sew; to sit on chairs and to wear clothing more corresponding to the Western styles. It is well that similar lessons, so far as possible, should be taught to the parents of those children also. It is well that they be taught with the Bibles also. Let us not mistake. Civilization is not Christianization, as many are disposed to force themselves to believe. If all of the heathen sat upon chairs, instead of on the ground, and ate with knives and forks, instead of their fingers, they would thereby be in a measure civilized. But this would not Christianize them, even though they were helped to the civilized methods by the most earnest Christians.

We are not disputing, however, that there are probably some genuine conversions amongst the heathen. We are merely controverting the thought of the possibility of Christianizing the world. Sometimes a more nearly correct view of the true situation of affairs finds expression through the lips of prominent clergymen. For instance, the following quoted from the *Manchester, England, Dispatch*, says:—

THE TASK OF CONVERTING ENGLAND TO CHRISTIANITY

According to Canon Alexander, of Gloucester, "the church of England is still at the beginning of the long task of the conversion of the English people to Christianity. What is the result?" he asks. "If we step out for a moment from the whirl of machinery, and look frankly at what is being done, we cannot but feel the inadequate results. Is the spiritual outlook all we dreamed of, all we hoped for?"

"Look at this city and give your answer. Is it not a terrible phenomenon that confronts us today—that of a highly organized church in the midst of a population which is still largely Pagan, face to face with a growing democracy on which no doubt the Christian spirit has left a very decided mark, but which, nevertheless, still stands for the most part, outside our gates? Is it not a fact that the church of England is still at the beginning of the long task of the conversion of the English people to Christianity, and for this task is it not power we need?"

But even Canon Alexander has too large a conception of the church in one sense and too narrow a one in another sense. He thinks of the Episcopal church and its regular attendants. And to him the pagans of England are those who attend no church services. We hold, however, that the Scriptural lines are different; that the true church is composed of those who through faith and consecration are in hearty loyalty to the Lord and his Word, whether they attend church services or not. Tested by this standard we hold that there are very few in the church of England who belong to the Lord's church, which the Apostle designates, "The church of the first-borns, whose names are written in heaven." Very few, either inside or outside of the Episcopal church, will profess to be members of this church, if the requirements are clearly before their minds, as Jesus and the apostles stated them.

Our Lord said, "He that would be my disciple must take up his cross and follow me;" and Paul said, "Whosoever will live godly shall suffer persecution." The Apostle said that the divine will is accomplished only in "those who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

ENGLAND'S RICH CALLED ROBBERS

The Hon. Lloyd George startled the entire British nation by the most radical speech delivered by any cabinet officer for many years. We quote from the speech as follows:—

"The day will come, and it is not distant, when England will shudder at its toleration of this state of things when it was rolling in wealth. I say again that apart from its humanity and its essential injustice, it is guilty of robbery and confiscation of what is the workman's share of the riches of the land. I have heard some foolish mutterings that much recognition of this fact in legislation may drive capital away. There is nothing capital need fear so much as the despair of the multitude. I should like to know where it will flee, for, judging by the unmistakable symptoms of the times, there will soon be no civilized land in the world where proper provision for the aged, the broken and the unfortunate among those who toil, will not be regarded as the first charge upon the wealth of the land.

"There is a good deal of nonsense talked about capital. You would imagine that if capital is offended it will immediately shake the dust of this country off its feet and go to other lands where there are no agitators, no radicals, no socialists. The fact of the matter is, the greatest capitalist of this country is nature. England's natural resources have made England rich. You would imagine from the vain and furious talk of peers and their apologists that England's rich natural resources were brought here at the time of the Norman conquest by the ancestors of our great landlords; that they were placed in conven-

ient spots by these dukes and earls and barons after they had stolen the common lands from the people."

Since the foregoing, Lord Asquith, premier, declares that the government was prepared to set aside a fund, \$1,500,000, to help the unemployed, and the admiralty has given out orders for the construction of nine torpedo-boat destroyers and five unarmored cruisers, to cost a total of \$12,500,000, two months earlier than originally had been intended.

The premier also made a bid for recruits, saying that the war office was ready to take on 24,000 men for winter training in the special reserves.

We remind our readers that we have already pointed out that the standing armies of Europe, although very expensive, have constituted a safety-valve by taking large numbers of men out of competition in employment. The British Premier was acting along this line in proposing an increase of British recruits.

Attending a congress of bishops of the church of England at Manchester was the Lord Bishop of Perth, who preached at St. Philip's church, Salford, on "Social Problems." He said:

"There never was an age when men and women were so faced with social inequality. The workers are organized and demanding a fairer share of this world's goods, the product of their labor.

"There are thousands whose only thoughts are for sport, thousands whose only thoughts are for pleasure, and thousands who think of nothing but their own salvation, by giving of their superfluity to the poor. What interest do they take in the social crisis? Millions of otherwise good people are not taking the trouble to see the distress. For these some day there may be a rude awakening.

"The present system cannot go on. The poor do not want charity. They want the right to live a full and a free life. To imagine that all is right, and that the present agitation will pass away, is to be absolutely blind to the signs of the times. To see men wasting their time and fighting over trifles is enough to make angels weep. Christians might proclaim a truce for a few years to help put an end to the present distress."

He had no remedy to offer for the present social state, but he thought it would come, as all other great changes, gradually, almost imperceptibly.

SPIRIT OF THE WORLD CREEPING IN

Attending the same conference was the Bishop of Durham. His discourse is thus reported in an English journal:—

"They saw going on before their eyes a disintegration of godly customs and the admission into the church of the fatal spirit of the world. They saw gaps and ruinous places in our social and industrial system, just now made mournfully conspicuous by a wide and complicated depression in the world of commerce, and by a civil war of class against class. This was the woeful phenomenon of unemployment."

In conclusion, his Lordship, after pointing out that English towns looked miserable, and that Lancashire must have been a lovely place until man spoiled it, said that so long as the rich lived in luxury, so long would the poor live in poverty. He hoped the discussions this week would show churchmen the importance and gravity of the situation, and that they would all return and do what they could in their own sphere to help the toiling millions.

The entrance of the procession into the Cathedral was an imposing and impressive spectacle. The Lord Mayor and members of the corporation took their places in the Council pews on the left of the main porch, the visiting mayors of the boroughs in the diocese taking those on the opposite side of the aisle.

BLINDED AS TO THE CAUSES

At the same conference Prof. Burkitt, of Cambridge College, spoke against the infallibility of the Bible along the lines of Evolution and Higher Criticism. Probably none of the learned Lord Bishops, whom as one of the teachers of the clergy he addressed, realized that the false doctrine which he enunciated is responsible for the spirit of the world amongst the prosperous members of the church and for the discontent amongst the poor. The Word of God cannot be set aside with impunity. The baneful results are being manifested throughout the civilized world. The professor said:—

"Can we accept St. Paul's doctrine of sin and death, a doctrine so closely bound up with a belief in the story of Eden and the forbidden fruit? You know we can do nothing of the kind. St. Paul, relying on the Book of Genesis, assumes that through Adam sin entered into the world, and death through sin.

"We have learned through the open book of nature a very different story. We have learned that countless generations of living creatures had lived and died before man appeared. For us the story of Adam and Eve belongs to Asiatic folklore."

JAPANIZED CHRISTIANITY

A Japanese writer says respecting Japanese Christianity:—"The period 1877-87 was marked by movements opposed to independence; everywhere there were attempts at fusion with American and English churches. . . . Students felt such confidence in their foreign teachers that they scrupulously observed the restrictions imposed by them as to smoking, sake-drinking, amusements, and Sunday observance, to such a degree that they considered the least infraction of these rules as a sin.

"During the period 1887-97 the traditional theology and the Puritan morality began to be shaken."

The writer in the Tokyo *Mainichi* says:—

"Up to 1887, thanks to the prevailing infatuation for Western things, the evangelists enjoyed unquestioned authority. But at this time the Darwinian doctrines began to spread in Japan, and Christianity began to be denounced as unscientific. It was a period of lectures and ardent discussions between missionaries and students, and, notwithstanding the best efforts, the reading of Darwin, Spencer and Mill shook the old beliefs of many. Other relaxing influences contributed to this result. Unitarian missionaries arrived from America; the new German theology took root in Japan; many young pastors, returning from their studies in Europe and America, spread the disquieting news that the old doctrines were felt to be outworn and that most professing Christians were by no means so strict as to smoking, drinking and Sabbath observances as they were expected to be in Japan. It was generally felt that a revision of doctrine was necessary, in order to try to settle what and how much it was desirable or possible to believe. At the same time, dissensions among the already numerous Christian sects represented in Japan were on the increase. All these motives worked together to strengthen the desire for independence on the part of the Japanese."

In a letter to the London *Guardian*, the church of England Bishop of Southern Tokyo says:—

"Before long the foreign missionaries will be obliged to remit all their powers into the hands of the independent Japanese pastors and to retire from the country. There would then remain only a few as professors of theology. As long as the present state of things continues, there are not likely to be great changes in the doctrines, constitutions or ceremonies of the churches. But once the foreign influence is finally eliminated, we may expect a series of profound changes, and an elaboration of doctrines tending to fuse the ideas of the Orient and Occident."

THE PAPACY HAVING MORE TROUBLE

Apparently the spirit of evil is becoming singularly restless in the Latin American republic to the south of us. In Ecuador the church is again entering upon an hour of persecution; in Argentina the socialists and anarchists are breathing future disaster; in Uruguay, Congress has passed an obnoxious divorce bill and is now attempting to close all the religious schools; in Catholic Chile there is incessant agitation against the alleged "autocracy of the hierarchy," and in Guatemala the church stands shorn of most of her rights. Now the current *Literary Digest* thus throws a little additional light upon a matter of which we had heard something before:—

"The Mexican government, apparently inspired by the example of France, has issued a notification to the local authorities throughout the country to make inventories of the property of the church and report the same to the head of the republic. In addition to this, the Bishops and other clergy of Mexico have been warned 'to see that no property of any description is alienated or disposed of, because the government claims it is the property of the Republic of Mexico and it must be conserved and duly cared for in the name of the republic.'"

"The peremptory tone assumed by the government has, it is said, caused some perturbation at the Vatican, which, however, during hundreds of years, has become accustomed to such claims, but among the Mexican clergy there is consternation, for, better than the Vatican, do the clergy of Mexico understand the temper of the government. Of course, it is expected that the church will protest as vigorously as possible, and, viewing the situation in the light of recent experience in France, it is possible that the protests may have some effect, for in France, in spite of the utmost endeavor, the victory over the church was only partial, and it is claimed that the Gallic church is stronger today than before its separation from the state.

"The claim of the Mexican government is, however, more radical than that of France, a rather surprising fact, because a belief prevails that, in Mexico, church and state were on friendlier relations than in most of the Spanish-American republics."—*Syracuse Catholic Sun*.

BOSTON PASTORS' UNION

A dispatch from Boston is being widely published, narrating that the ministers there propose a union. Rev. Johnson is quoted thus:—

"The conditions among ministers here in Boston are such that something has got to be done. A number of my friends in this city are actually preparing to leave the ministry. They have bought little farms in New England, to which they will retire because they simply cannot live on their salaries. The situation is grave. We are going to form a union along the same practical and closely drawn lines as the great unions of labor. The proposed union would arbitrate not only as to salaries, but a number of other questions would be under its control."

When St. Paul was in similar straits he went to tent-making. Under the Lord's providence that was one of the "all things" that worked for his good. We recommend the proposition to the Boston preachers and others as spiritually wholesome and spiritually beneficial. If each minister supported himself outside his ministerial labors, he would feel perfectly free to tell his congregation the truth, to give them the benefit of his long years of education. Under present conditions not many of them have the courage to do this; or, as many have remarked, "My bread is not buttered on that side;" or, according to the Scriptural presentation, they look "every one to his own quarter," his own interest, his own denomination.—Isa. 47:15.

'MOTHER AND DAUGHTER' MORE RECONCILED

The Catholic fathers of the district of Clarksdale, Miss., are conducting a mission to Catholics and non-Catholics at Tutwiler, Miss. One of the most unique features of the mission, aside from its being the first ever given at that place, is that the sermons are delivered from the Methodist church pulpit.

A DANGEROUS AND FORMIDABLE GUN

A gun on a new principle has been invented. Noiseless, it is all the more dangerous. Unlike a gun in shape it will not be easy to detect. Cheap and simple of construction it may prove a terrible weapon for anarchists. The *Waterbury American* says of it:—

The gun is noiseless, and is fired without powder. And this is not all. Mr. Patten asserts that the gun can discharge bullets faster than they can be loaded into its magazine, and that the loading speed is therefore practically the only limit to the number of shots that can be fired. He maintains that 50,000 shots a minute can be discharged from this new weapon, and adds that he'll demonstrate this when he gets a full-sized one in commission.

The gun is fired by centrifugal force. All there is to it is a big wheel with a crank for revolving it. In the 10-inch model this can be turned by hand. A motor of 50-horse power would be required to turn the six-foot model he hopes to build.

The bullets—not shells such as are used in other guns, but simply balls of lead or steel—are poured into the gun. The operator revolves the wheel, and the bullets begin to pour out in a steady stream. They fly so fast that they have the appearance of one long, leaden ribbon, and if the gun were revolved on its base the stream of lead would sweep around in an arc which would mow down anything in front of it.

A six-foot gun is the largest Mr. Patten hopes to build. It is to cost \$800, and will weigh only 500 pounds, according to Mr. Patten, yet it will be able to shoot 50,000 half-inch steel bullets a minute, and kill at 2,000 feet. It is Mr. Patten's idea to mount such a gun on an automobile, the motor of which could be used to operate the gun.

JEWISH PROSPECTS

The following report comes from Constantinople relative to the employment of Jews as government officials:—

"The new Turkish government is at present engaged in compiling a list of such Jews as would first come under consideration for government service. Since there is need at the present time of a great number of educated and intelligent officials, it is hoped to find among the Jews an array of such judicious and discreet characters as would meet the demands of the new era. Just how attentive the government is to the national and religious interests is shown by the fact that out of deference to the Christian Minister of Cabinet, there is no session either on Friday, which is the Mohammedan holiday, or on Sunday."

The upset in Turkey, with the resulting prospect of constitutional government, religious freedom, and equal rights to all races, has opened a new prospect to Zionism. Heretofore purchase and ownership of land in the Turkish empire has been denied Jews, but now, according to a London dispatch in the *New York Sun*, secret land purchases made by Jews in Palestine, notwithstanding the prohibition, are being declared, and a Jewish syndicate is said to be negotiating for a large part of the Sultan's private domain, now in the market, and comprising the whole length of the Jordan valley from Tiberias to the Dead Sea. Given a free hand in Palestine, to buy and possess what is purchasable, and to live and work under fair laws, Jewish capital and energy may accomplish much.

"FIGHTING AGAINST GOD"

ACTS 5:17-42.—FEBRUARY 14.

GOLDEN TEXT:—"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven."—Matt. 5:10.

"Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," is a doctrine peculiar to Christianity. Until the principles of divine government are somewhat understood, it seems absurd to claim that Christians are the special objects of divine love and care and, at the same time, to admit that generally they have a larger proportion of trials, difficulties, persecutions, etc., than others. The philosophy of this is the interpretation of the divine plan of the ages. From no other standpoint can the matter be reasonably understood in all its details. From any other standpoint the question would arise, Why not have made mankind perfect and have preserved him from undue temptations and have granted him enlightenment that he might always choose the good and refuse the evil? Why not have protected those loyal to the Lord and thus have published the truth, its Author and its servants? Why not have overwhelmed the evil, instead of allowing the evil in so many ways to vanquish the good—as at the cross, and in all of life's experiences?

"SO IT SEEMED GOOD IN THY SIGHT"

The philosophy of why God permitted the evil to triumph now, as beautifully stated in the *SCRIPTURE STUDIES*, Vol. I. ("The Plan of the Ages"), we can but briefly suggest here. The permission of evil is but one feature in the divine program, according to which our Creator purposes that all of his intelligent subjects shall be free moral agents, and that each of them, angels and men, shall be fully tested in respect to their love and loyalty to him and to the principles of righteousness, which he personifies. Additionally we have the special development and testing of character, having been invited to be joint-heirs with Jesus in the Millennial kingdom and properly required to be "more than conquerors"—loyal in the very highest degree, in thought and word and deed. The testing of such for so high a position in the divine purpose justifies most crucial tests. When it is perceived that this Gospel age is the period for the selection of this royal priesthood for the spiritual plane, and that the Jewish age was the period for the selection of the earthly representatives of the kingdom, it can be seen at a glance why the way of the called, chosen, faithful, elect, has been made so narrow; why so few have found it and why still fewer have had the faith and courage and patience to walk therein to the end of life's journey.

OPEN THE PRISON-DOORS

Our lesson is a sequel to the preceding one, which tells of the healing of the lame man in the temple by Peter and John, and of the wonderful opportunity thus afforded the disciples to preach the Gospel to the people and to the rulers. The result of their hearing before the officers was their commitment to prison for a further hearing on the next day, since it was contrary to the Jewish law that the trial should proceed after dark. Verse 17 in brief space tells us that the high priest Annas, was a Sadducee, which signifies that they were agnostics and higher critics, who believed nothing respecting the divine revelation, nothing of a future life by resurrection, or otherwise. Josephus informs us that most of the upper class of his day were skeptics, Sadducees, though the mass of the people were Pharisees. It will thus be seen that there is a close correspondence between the ecclesiastical conditions in the end of the Jewish age and those which now prevail in the end of this age. Today, both in pulpit and pew, the more learned from a human standpoint have very slight belief in anything beyond the present life. Their faith has gradually given way under the attacks of Higher Critics and Evolution, because already undermined by the errors of the dark ages, prominently the teaching that nearly everybody is enroute to eternal torment, either because of divine inability to prevent it or because of divine foreordination to that effect.

The teachings of the apostles reflected specially against the Sadducees, because the basis of it was the declaration that Christ had risen from the dead; and secondly, because this very high priest and his associates had been leaders in the conspiracy which led to our Lord's crucifixion. Our text says that they were "filled with indignation" (revised version, "jealousy.") The Greek word seems to signify that they were hot with indignation, and anxious to have them convicted before the Sanhedrin and disposed of. Under these circumstances they were sent to prison.

During the night, however, the angel of the Lord led them forth miraculously while the keepers of the prison slept, and bade them go to the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life. Thus did God intersperse evidences of his divine care and protection with other experiences which seem to be contrary, and thus were the apostles and the early church

and we, who read the account, strengthened and encouraged to have good confidence in the Lord; that greater is he who is on our part than all they that be against us, and that even the adverse experiences are of divine permission. As our Lord said to Pilate, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were permitted of my Father."

Note the expression of the angel's message (v. 20), "All the words of this life." There is a sermon for us in those few words. They remind us that our message consists of "wonderful words of life"—life from the dead, secured for us and ultimately for all, through the death of the Redeemer, and through his resurrection, and to be actually brought to us and to all at his second advent. The words remind us also that we who believe do now, by faith, enter into this newness of life—the resurrection life, in a figurative sense, and that our resurrection, our life, if we are faithful, will come to us as our final "change," in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

TEACHING THE PEOPLE

Obedient to God's message, the apostles went early to the temple, and began, as before, to teach the people, to explain to them the Old Testament Scriptures and types, which foretold that Messiah should first suffer before he would enter into his glory, and they identified him as the Messiah. They explained his sacrificial death, his resurrection and his sending forth upon believers his holy Spirit, and that this also was foretold in the prophecies. They pointed out that the Gospel message was for the selection of the faithful "Israelites indeed" to be Messiah's bride and joint-heir in his kingdom later to be established for the blessing of Israel and all the nations of the world. This message still has an attraction for the common people, and would have also for the more educated had not their philosophies and traditions turned their hearts away from the simplicity of faith in the Lord's second coming and kingdom to a belief that they themselves, without the Lord, are to convert the world—by which they mean civilization.

Meantime the Sanhedrin, or senate, met at the appointed hour, but the officers sent to bring the prisoners found them not—though the prison was every way secured—until it was learned that they were teaching in the temple and evidently having considerable influence with the people; so the officers wisely arrested them quietly, for fear they should create an uproar and be themselves the sufferers.

"BRING THIS MAN'S BLOOD UPON US"

The Sanhedrin acted as the court, the high priest as the prosecutor. Thus, inquiring of the apostles if they were not violating strict orders already given them respecting preaching in the name of the Crucified One, they claimed that he had risen from the dead; that he was Messiah, etc. Not waiting for an answer, the high priest proceeded to show the Sanhedrin the logical effect of their being permitted to continue this teaching—they were filling Jerusalem with their teaching, bringing upon them (the high priest and the Sanhedrin which had condemned Jesus) this man's blood—that is to say, responsibility for his unjust death. This shows that they appreciated the position, and that the apostles also appreciated it and had told the truth on the subject unsparingly.

The answer of the Apostle Peter and others is given in brief form, but is a model answer in every sense of the word. Not rudely, yet forcefully and logically, they set forth seven points:

(1) That, uncontrovertibly, where the command of God and the command of men conflict, the divine authority must be recognized as supreme.

(2) That they were loyal to the God of their fathers, whose power in the resurrection of Jesus was being attested.

(3) That it was true that Jewish rulers were responsible for Jesus' death.

(4) That God has honored him, raised him from the dead and taken him to heaven.

(5) That he was the Prince and Savior of divine appointment.

(6) That they were not preaching vengeance, but mercy—not penalty for the crucifixion, but forgiveness of sins to all Israel, on condition of repentance.

(7) That they personally were witnesses, and that the power of the holy Spirit in them and in all believers corroborated these facts.

This is a wonderful testimony, and no doubt the experiences of the apostles in being delivered from the prison on the previous night helped to give them the courage so necessary at this moment. No doubt also the knowledge of that incident, coming to Gamaliel, led him to offer the moderate advice which

the Sanhedrin followed. He advised them, "Take heed what ye do to these men. If this teaching be of God, ye cannot overthrow it. If it be of men, it will come to naught." The result was that the apostles were again charged not to preach in the name of Jesus, and, by way of showing the authority of the Court, it was ordered that they be whipped, scourged. The apostles, realizing the power of the Lord, endured the chastening with thanksgiving that they were accounted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus. Thus the Lord blessed them in their hearts with his peace and grace, while he did not shield them from the scourging. In this, also, we learn a lesson respecting divine providences.

FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM

Our Golden Text applies the general principle enunciated by our Lord, "Through much tribulation shall ye enter the kingdom." This is not because divine power is not able to shield us from the tribulations, nor because our Lord is not interested in our welfare, but, quite the contrary, because, according to divine tests placed upon the church, the new nature can be developed, educated, crystallized, only through the tests and trials it will endure through its earthly members in the flesh, through loyalty to the Lord. These testings will come along various lines—faith, obedience, endurance, love, etc. And it is only to the overcomers that the reward is promised. But, thank God, grace to help in time of need is promised us. If our hearts are loyal and we do our best, the Lord will see to the remainder.

The Golden Text reminds us that we are to expect persecution, and Bible history shows us that these are to be expected from the church, as much or more than from the world. Indeed, when our Lord speaks of the world, he evidently refers to "churchianity." He says, "Marvel not if the world hate you. Ye know that it hated me before it hated you." The world that hated Jesus and crucified him was the Jewish world, or

nominal Israel; and the world from which we may look for persecution, similarly, would be the so-called Christian world—Christendom. Not only so, but sometimes the persecution comes from those who once were brethren in the truth—those who once dipped with us in the dish of divine nourishments at the table of the Lord. The trial is all the more severe when it comes from this quarter. Yet it was not so with our Lord, and does it not seem to have cut him to the quick that Judas kissed him at the very moment that he betrayed him?

But as none of these things moved the Master away from confidence in the divine providence shaping affairs in the interest of the church, and as he returned not railing for railing, neither must we. And such experiences rightly received will no doubt make us more and more copies of his dear Son.

Our Lord declares that the blessing for persecution endured is for righteousness' sake, and the Apostle, in line with this, declared, "Let none of you suffer for evil-doing, not as a busy-body in other men's matters." This, of course, will not hinder us from being misrepresented and charged with evil-doing, even as our Lord himself was so charged. Was he not crucified under the charge of blasphemy, which, in his day, was esteemed to be the worst of all offenses? Similarly in our day we must not think it strange if the adversary shall seek to misrepresent the facts and put light for darkness and darkness for light. It is for each of us to preserve a conscience void of offense towards God and men, that, like the Apostle of old, we may be able to call upon all men everywhere to witness whether or not we have coveted their silver or their gold, or done ought to their injury, or left undone any good toward them that was within our power.

In this connection let us remember also that the decision in each of our cases is with God. As St. Paul declares, "It is a light thing that I should be judged of you or of any man. Yea, I judge not mine own self, but he that judgeth me is the Lord."

LED AWAY BY THE ERROR OF THE WICKED

"He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."—1 John 2:9-11.

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."—2 Pet. 3:17.

As love is declared to be the distinguishing characteristic of all who have the Spirit of Christ, so lack of love may be considered the distinguishing characteristic denominated the "error of the wicked."

Our Lord emphasized the fact that supreme love of God is the first duty of all his creatures, and love for the neighbor as for ourselves a closely allied one. But speaking to the church, to the consecrated, to those hoping to be "members of his body" in glory, he said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another even as I have loved you."—John 13:34.

We are forced to the opinion that the Lord guided to the presentation of "the vow" for the very purpose of making it a trial and test amongst those professing to be his disciples and enjoying the light, blessing, privileges of present truth. Of course, we had never surmised that that little vow, or solemn promise, or resolution to God would have had such an effect; nevertheless, had we known at the beginning what we now know, by our Lord's assisting grace we would have done nothing different from what we did.

In presenting the matter, we had in view solely the assistance of the Lord's dear flock—to help them draw nearer to the Lord, who is our refuge and habitation, so that in the "evil day," already begun, no harm might come nigh them, because safe in that dwelling-place. We saw the hawk, the adversary, plotting for the stumbling of many, especially of the saints. We did what we could for their relief, as kindly and as wisely as we knew how, and with prayer to the Lord for the wisdom from above.

ANGER, MALICE, STRIFE—EVERY EVIL WORK

We well knew that only the fully consecrated could be expected to take the vow and that they would not be a majority, even on the select lists of the WATCH TOWER. We expected, too, that some of the consecrated might hesitate for a time to give up their liberty to so full an extent—because some might not see, as we do, the necessity for so drastic a resolution, for so tight a binding of the sacrifice to the altar—though this would seem to be the demand of our consecration vow, if necessary.

But we surely were surprised by the effect of the vow on some few of the brethren. What they saw in it that provoked them to anger, bitterness, hatred, strife, evil-speaking, evil-surmising, slanders and wolfish back-biting, we cannot see.

The effect of the suggestion of the vow seems to have operated on these brethren as an emetic—not that they took it, but that even looking at it led them to belch forth cruelly, bitterly, slanderously, against it, and particularly against us for presenting it. The noble esteem in which we held these dear brethren made the shock to us all the more severe. According to the Scriptures, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." But, in advance, we had no suspicion that such ugly, cruel sentiments, such unkind suspicions were in their hearts to come out. Evidently the Lord, who searcheth the heart, knew just the effect the vow would have, and evidently he guided us unwittingly to its presentation, as a part of the testing which he wished to bring upon his people at this time.

Note here that it is not the vow, nor anything which we have written concerning it, that is causing the division which is rapidly taking place, and by which a small company of those whom we loved (and still love) are alienating themselves from us, and, we fear, from the Lord, and from the light of present truth. Remember, that in no sense of the word did we at any time suggest that the taking of the vow should be a test of brotherhood, nor of saintship even. We stand by the thought which we already made prominent—that the Lord's people are free and that no one has a right to put a yoke of bondage upon his brother, either to take the vow, or not to take it. We merely advised the vow, as we still do, just as we advised the original consecration vow in the language of the Apostle, "I beseech you, brethren, present your bodies a living sacrifice."—Rom. 12:1.

Similarly we urge this as in full accord with the spirit of the Lord's word, and related to our original covenant to be dead to sin and self, and to everything that would hinder a brother in the narrow way, or hinder the progress of our Master's cause; yea, more, that we would sacrifice all to assist his cause and to protect and assist the brethren. Let it be noticed that the split is coming from those who oppose the vow. They are not opposing an attempt to force it upon them, for no such attempt has been made. They are opposing this feature of present truth, trying to hinder others from taking the vow—forcing an issue on the subject and arousing, so far as their influence goes, an evil, malicious spirit, antagonistic to the vow and the channel through which it came.

To this end circulars are being printed and scattered abroad

to poison and to prejudice the minds of all who will come under the influence. As there are but two Masters, which are these serving? Our question is not, Which do they say they are serving? nor, Which do they think they are serving? We say to God's people, Judge for yourselves what sort of spirit is this which is seeking to cause division amongst the followers of Christ, and that is willing to hint "all manner of evil" and to surmise and to back-bite? We do not believe this the Spirit of Christ. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Are their fruits grapes or thorns? We ask these dear brethren to search their own hearts and to determine this question. "His servants ye are unto whom ye render service." (Rom. 6:16) We are firmly convinced that they are serving the cause of the adversary—ignorantly. We sorrow for them; we pray for them. We endeavor to set the matter forth in these columns in its true light for the protection of the Lord's dear sheep against that evil influence and for the recovery of any of those dear brethren who have not yet gone so far as to be irrecoverable. We use great plainness of speech that, as the Apostle suggested, "We may pull them out of the fire."—Jude 23.

NOT IGNORANT OF HIS DEVICES

We believe that our common adversary has had to do with the stirring up of this matter and that the Lord will evidently overrule it as one of the "all things" for the strengthening of those who are truly his. Already we are receiving many letters telling of greatly increased blessing as a result of this very shaking up. Still our hearts yearn over the dear brethren who are making shipwreck of their eternal interests in so foolish a manner. If they did not wish to take the vow, they had a perfect right to use their own judgment and liberty. But why should they hinder others from the use of their liberty? Why should they set themselves in antagonism and allow such bitterness to develop in their hearts, such unbrotherliness, as some of them have manifested?

We can only suppose that our great adversary has been injecting evil into their minds, and that the Lord is permitting it, possibly because there was some wrong condition of heart there, which neither they nor we previously discerned. But alas! that they do not discern their own condition, and go to the Lord and purge themselves of the evil thoughts and surmises, and make amends and return into fullest fellowship with the Lord and with us all. It is not for us to judge their hearts and to say what evil was there, perhaps for months or for years before the sight of the vow acted as an emetic. It is not for us to judge them, condemn them, for the pride and ambition, or the nursing of secret faults. It is ours only to note and reprove their present bitterness of spirit, which is contrary to the Spirit of the Lord, and to apply the Apostle's warning, "Mark them which cause divisions amongst you; and avoid them." (Rom. 16:17) We are not to render bitter words for bitter words, slander for slander, nor reviling for reviling. It is not for us to smite them, either physically or with the tongue—nor even in our thoughts, but rather to pity them and to pray for them. Avoiding them does not mean excommunicating them, nor any other unkindness. It merely means what it says—"Avoid them." If a brother stumbles into some filth and rejoices in it and glories in its stench, and will not permit us to assist him out of it, our best plan is to "hold our noses" and go our way and avoid him, until he gets cleansed from the filth, or at least until he invites us to assist him so to do. Our avoidance of him for a time may be the very best lesson we could give him of our detestation of his attitude, his condition.

LED INTO SIN AND INTO DARKNESS

Darkness is a synonym for the condition of those in sin—those out of harmony with God; for God is Light—"In him is no darkness at all." Where the leading away by the adversary is a doctrinal deflection, it may, or it may not, lead to a wrong spirit. We know of a great many people whom we believe to be in great doctrinal error, who, nevertheless, maintain a spirit of kindness. We know of many worldly people who have a much keener sense of justice and right, not to mention love, than have some who have deflected from the truth. But while doctrinal errors are dangerous, and should be avoided, it is still more serious a matter to lose the spirit of love—the holy Spirit. He who loveth not his brother loveth not God. He who hateth his brother and back-biteth him is not under the control of the spirit of God, whatever may have been his professions or his past relationship to the Lord and to the truth.

So then, of all dangers that beset the pathway of those who are seeking glory, honor and immortality, none is more dangerous than to be "led astray with the error of the wicked" into lovelessness. This is quickly followed by antagonism to the truths which should be held and thus into antagonism to the God who should be served, and to whom the brethren are related, and who declares that whatsoever is done against them is done against him. Those "led astray with the error of the

wicked" into a reprobate condition of mind, of heart, are sure to get into doctrinal darkness. Hence we must not be surprised if some of those who have manifested a bitter, loveless spirit, and who have been harrying the Lord's flock in a back-biting and wolfish manner and endeavoring for some time to stampede the stragglers and to corral them for their own purposes should become more and more dim and uncertain in respect to the truth and unable to follow the light further.

The Lord declares that "the path of the just is as a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." But as a right condition of heart is necessary in order to get into this shining path, so a wrong condition of heart would surely take us off the shining pathway and into the darkness which so generally prevails all about us. This also, we may concede, is a part of the adversary's program of opposition to the Lord and the harvest work.

While greatly rejoicing in the further clearing up of the subject of the covenants, as set forth heretofore in these columns and further elaborated in this and recent issues, we have, nevertheless, the sorrowful thought that it may mean the passing on of the light before those who are walking in the light, and the leaving of some of our dear ones in a measure of darkness, which will increase day by day, as they either turn aside or go backward, or even fail to advance—"walking in the light." Yet what can we do? We dare not stop. We must go on, whither the Captain of our salvation leads. Much as we love those who stop, or those who turn aside, it is for us to say, "Where he leads I will follow." This does not signify that every one of the Lord's followers will see this matter of the covenants immediately, in the same clearness and fulness as do we, and as we have tried to express it. Indeed, some never see great truths with the same clearness as do others, and yet are following on, their hearts leading more rapidly than their reasoning faculties can follow; nor does it signify that we are putting tests upon the flock. The Lord has been putting these tests before us, all through this harvest time, and leading us from knowledge to knowledge and from grace to grace, as we followed his leading.

STRENGTHEN THE BRETHREN

Already we hear of circulars being sent about which oppose the vow and admonish the friends that Brother Russell is endeavoring to lead the church away from the ransom, away from the precious blood of Christ. The argument is that when we say that the New Covenant is not in operation yet, but is to be a New (Law) Covenant between God and the Jewish nation, which will be sealed at the close of this age and be in effect throughout the Millennium, to bless Israel, and through Israel all the nations—this, we are told, is denying the ransom, denying the blood of Christ. How foolish! We would accredit even the babes in Christ with more knowledge and a better logic on the subject than this. Surely a film or mist of some kind is coming "over the eyes of understanding" of the dear brother who presents this illogical proposition. It is a fact that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that he arose from the dead the third day and that he appeared in the presence of God for us. Those facts stand, regardless of whether they are connected with one covenant or another covenant or no covenant. You and I, dear reader, believed in the death of Christ as our redemption price before we had any knowledge of the covenants.

We were justified by faith in the precious blood, and not by our knowledge or ignorance of the covenants. And this is in harmony with the Apostle's statement that we are justified freely through his blood and have the remission of our sins. Nor is your justification and mine dependent even upon our understanding of the philosophy of the ransom and the atonement based upon it. We were justified by our faith before we understood the philosophy, and our justification still rests upon our faith and not upon the philosophy. But our faith has been made more clear, more substantial by the philosophy. Ask yourself the question, "Where did I get the philosophy of the ransom, and the atonement, in which I now rejoice?" And, Where did the dear brother who sends out this circular letter get his knowledge of the ransom and of the atonement? It all came from God and it has come in this harvest time, because it is God's due time to make it known.

If there are other publications on the face of the earth which present the true philosophy of the ransom and the atonement, outside of those published by the WATCH TOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY, we have no knowledge of them and would be glad to be informed respecting them. If there are any other publications on earth which have so clearly and so persistently and so logically set forth the value of the precious blood and the philosophy of the redemption, we would be glad of the fact, and would be pleased to know of them and their authors.

Be not deceived, dear friends. Such blindness and confusion are of the adversary. Remember that for years we have been explaining that we are in the harvest time, and must expect the wheat to be threshed and winnowed and "sifted like wheat." If now you feel a shaking think first for yourself and your own safety. Hold fast to what you have already attained, and, through the agency of the vow, or in any other manner possible, draw still closer to the Lord. Bind your sacrifice to the altar. If some lose their hold and seem likely to be shaken out—and these same ones you dearly love and of them expected better things, love them still, but not with the weakness which encourages them in wrong. Rather remember that "faithful are the wounds of a friend," and in love reprove them.

The "shaking" (Heb. 12:27) which is now due to take place in the house of God is a part of the same which will ultimately extend to the whole world, causing a great time of trouble, setting every man's hand against his neighbor. The Apostle declares this, assuring us that everything that can be shaken will be shaken out, so that ultimately, both in the church and subsequently in the world, only "those things which cannot be shaken will remain." The same spirit of bitterness and wolfish back-biting will ere long reach the world and set every man's hand against his neighbor. Under another figure the Apostle explains the same situation, saying that "Every man's work shall be tried so as by fire," and only the developed characters will stand. Let us watch and pray and labor for this character which will have the divine approval and be acceptable to him forever. Naturally, and properly, these "siftings" are severest upon those who have been most favored of the Lord. "Who shall be able to stand?"

A SIMPLE TEST OF "THE VOW"

If your mind is in any degree agitated by this question, we suggest a very simple method whereby you may test it, reach a conclusion, and henceforth have your mind at rest on this subject. It is this: First, ask the Lord for wisdom to

know his will, to see things from his standpoint; second, take the latest statement of the vow on the New Calendar, or in TOWER, and read it item by item, slowly, thoughtfully. At the conclusion of each item, think it over carefully and judge of its contents by asking yourself two questions—Is this in harmony with the teachings of God's Word and pleasing to him? Then ask, would it be pleasing to Satan if I should make that promise, resolution, vow, to the Lord? and then ask, Would it probably be helpful or injurious to me to so resolve? Do this with each paragraph. Reach your decision and consider the matter settled forever.

Our opinion is that nearly all the most earnest of the consecrated class will conclude that God is well pleased with each of those seven provisions and that singly and collectively they could do you no harm, but might do you much good, besides the influence of the action upon others. We believe, also, that your conclusion will be that Satan would be very much displeased to have you make this fresh loop upon your sacrifice, binding it to the altar. If this is your conclusion you will, undoubtedly, promptly raise your heart to the Lord in prayer, saying, "O Lord, I thank thee that in thy providence this vow has been brought to my attention, as an assistance in making straight paths for my feet—an assistance to greater carefulness respecting my conduct as thy representative amongst men. And, now, Lord, I do solemnly promise thee that I will observe all the provisions of this statement, to do them to the extent of my ability, relying upon thy promised grace to help in every time of need, through the merit of my dear Redeemer."

More than 5,500 of our readers have notified us that they have taken the vow and tell us of special blessing and nearness to the Lord since taking it. We know of only three who have since turned opponents to it. They are quite prominent brethren. We fear they decided without proper consideration. As the Scriptures say, This is to their shame. (Eccles. 5:4) Let this be a warning to others, not to follow their course, but to "sit down first and count the cost."

THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR

ACTS 6:8-15; 7:54; 8:3.—FEBRUARY 21.

GOLDEN TEXT:—"And they stoned Stephen calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."—Acts 7:59.

The infant Christian church prospered at Jerusalem. Not only was the Lord's blessing upon the apostles in their ministries, but upon others of the church also, who, full of love and zeal for the truth, told the good tidings as they had opportunity. They had the Gospel message in its purity, and it was a pleasure to tell it. They needed not inducements of social advancement, financial prosperity, honorable titles and good salaries. The message itself incited love and devotion, and enkindled a flame of sacred love in their hearts which tended to make each believer a burning and shining light, as the Lord himself had enjoined. This same condition of things prevails again today, since the smoke of the dark ages is being washed from the eyes of our understanding, and since the dust and must of human tradition are being brushed from the Word of the Lord. Now, as then, the truth charms, sanctifies, energizes all who receive it. And each, according to his ability, is quickened to its service, regardless of cost or time, of energy, of human disapproval and ostracism.

THE ADVERSARY ACTIVE ALSO

Our great adversary will usually leave us comparatively at ease, if we are not actively engaged as heralds of the truth. Indeed, his policies seem to be to minister opiates wherever the truth is dispensed. He prefers that we sleep and dream, rather than that we be awake and on the alert, putting our lights upon candlesticks, that they may give light to those about us. It is not surprising, therefore, that he stirred up a great persecution against the early church, because of its activity. We must expect that similarly we will draw his fire upon ourselves, in proportion as we patiently and faithfully fight the good fight against sin and error—darkness.

Stephen, a young man of prominence who had been chosen a deacon at Jerusalem, was very zealous for the truth. He got into a public discussion, and his opponents, finding their arguments inferior to his, were angered instead of convinced. This shows their insincerity. Had they hungered and thirsted for the truth, they would have been glad to receive it from Stephen, or from anybody. Let us beware of such a spirit in ourselves, knowing that it is dangerous. In this case it led on to murder; not merely the murder accomplished when Stephen died, but they were murderers in advance, from the Lord's standpoint, because hatred of him was in their hearts; "And he that hateth his brother is a murderer." They had, however, respect to the outward forms of the law, and sought any pretext to justify them in killing their opponent. Had they no fear of God!

Apparently it is possible for men to get into such a condition of heart that they will not only speak evil of us and plot mischief against us, but to the extent that they can do so will be glad to effect our death. This is a part of the murderous spirit, whether they stop short of the actual death or not. It went to the limit with Stephen and with our Lord, and it may do so with us some day. Let us be on the side of the martyr rather than on the side of those whose wrong condition of heart our Lord explained, saying, "Satan hath filled thine heart."

Stephen's opponents were crafty. They hired witnesses to describe the teachings of Stephen in an unjust manner, saying he talked dishonorably of the Law and of Moses. Blasphemy in that day was the worst of crimes. As a result the people, the elders, the scribes came upon him, seized upon him and brought him to the Council, or place of trial. Then the prejudices of the people were again appealed to through witnesses who perverted the truth, saying that Stephen was continually saying things against the holy city and temple and the law and claiming that Jesus would destroy the place and change the customs. There was, perhaps, considerable truth in this statement, rightly understood. But as it was stated it was untrue; and so today in traducing us, some may tell partial truths, which really are falsehoods. It is weakness of human nature to suppose that such misrepresentations are excusable. They should remember how impossible it is to lie to the holy Spirit, as Ananias and Sapphira learned. The lesson to the Lord's faithful is that it is far better to be the sufferer under such circumstances than to be the one who causes the suffering and who must eventually answer for his crime.

"AS THE FACE OF AN ANGEL"

There is an inspiration of the heart and an illumination of the features which accompanies the presentation of the truth by those who are indwelt by the Lord's holy Spirit and who are speaking as his ambassadors. Many have noticed this peculiarity amongst those who are now rejoicing in what we designate "present truth." Doubtless this is akin to what is mentioned in our lesson respecting Stephen's face—that it was bright, happy, radiant "as the face of an angel." Ah! Stephen was an angel. An angel is a messenger, and if Stephen, by the grace of God, was permitted to be the divine messenger or mouth-piece and permitted to convey the "good tidings" to others, surely, then, we also are angels in the highest sense conceivable. No wonder there is no need since Pentecost that the angels should appear in human form! The sons of God, in-

dwelt by his Spirit, can be God's mouthpieces in the very highest sense.

Stephen's sermon is not directly a part of our lesson, but indirectly it should be borne in mind. It was a comprehensive view of divine favor in Israel, bringing the matter down to date and showing Jesus the son of Abraham, according to the flesh rejected and crucified by those who should have received him. This was the galling feature of the Gospel amongst the Jews—their responsibility as murderers of their Messiah. We read that his hearers

"GNASHED ON HIM WITH THEIR TEETH"

This signifies chagrin, disappointment, savage animosity. We read that they were "cut to the heart." Stephen's words were sharp and their force consisted not in any angry or bitter denunciation, but in plain, simple narration of the truth. This should be the style of all preaching. It is not necessary for us to say angry or bitter things. The truth itself is "sharper than any two-edged sword," and needs no unkind language, no profanity, no epithets to drive it home. Where immoderate and unchristian language is considered necessary it is a sure sign that the argument is correspondingly weak, and it warns us to beware. The truth itself is mighty, even if spoken by a little child.

Hearing Stephen with impatience, aggravated by the fact that his argument was true, they were gnashing their teeth with chagrin, because they were unable to detect a flaw or excuse for his death.

Finally, however, when he declared that he saw a vision of Christ at the right hand of God (whether he actually saw such a vision or merely pictured it before his hearers, we do not know), his statement of the matter furnished the excuse they had been waiting for, and, seizing it, they rushed upon him, crying out in a loud voice and stopping their ears, as though to convince one another that to willingly hear anything more on that line would be a participation in the blasphemy. They rushed him out of the city gate and stoned him. A young man, Saul, supposedly an officer of the Council, being present, gave his sanction by taking charge of the outer-garments of those who stoned him to death.

Such a martyrdom is not the style in our day; hence none of us will probably suffer death in that form. We have more refined forms of persecution. Christian people may get themselves into such a wrong attitude of heart as to think that they do God service in hurling slanders at those who have sought to do them good. And indeed who does not know that the blow of slander may be even more cruel and even more painful and more shameful than the literal stoning? Yet, strange to say, there are many who would read the account of Stephen's stoning, or Jesus' crucifixion, and who would roundly condemn all who took part in either, and who, nevertheless, would either unthinkingly or under supposition of doing God service engage in the worst form of persecution—stoning and crucifying and spearing with their tongues. We ask ourselves what was the matter with those Jews who thus maltreated our Lord and Stephen, and the answer comes back, "Ye have not the love of God in your hearts." Similarly we must answer in respect to those who in our day persecute through slander, vituperation, evil-speaking, evil-surmisings, evil-insinuations, etc.

FATHER, FORGIVE THEM

Stephen's attitude of heart towards his enemies indicates that he had not only received the holy Spirit as a gift, but that he had it as a living power, and that its fruitage was in his heart. He had only love for his enemies. Having done his very best to serve them with the truth, he had prayers for them in return for their imprecations and their cruel stones. He prayed, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." But it was not for Stephen to direct divine justice as to what should be the

reward of those who stoned him. We cannot suppose that he was attempting to direct the arm of the Infinite. We must assume that he was speaking merely for himself; that, so far as he himself was concerned, he had no desire that they should be punished. This beautiful condition of heart should be ours. "Owe no man anything but to love one another"—and to desire one another's welfare is the application of the divine rule to all the affairs of our lives.

We read that Saul (afterwards Paul) was amongst those who consented to this martyrdom. How strange the anomaly—that so many should think right and the divine service that which we know was very reprehensible in the sight of God! Seeing such great blindness on the part of one who subsequently declared, "I verily thought I did God service," should surely cause us to be very circumspect, very critical, in respect to our thoughts and deeds. We must remember that it is not a question of whose servants we claim to be, but, as our Lord said, "His servants ye are unto whom ye render service."

THEN STEPHEN FELL ASLEEP

No suggestion was given that the first Christian martyr passed immediately to heaven, and that with his expiring breath he became more alive than he ever was when he was alive. On the contrary, here as elsewhere in the Scriptures, death is pictured as a sleep.

"Asleep in Jesus, blessed sleep,
From which none ever wakes to weep."

How glad we are that this is so! The waking time will be after the close of the reign of sin and death; after our Redeemer's second advent, when the power divine will be in control, as instead of that of the prince of this world. Truly, "Weeping may endure for the night," but it ceases with our sleeping, and "joy cometh in the morning" of the resurrection.—Psa. 30:5.

"THEY WERE ALL SCATTERED ABROAD"

The death of Stephen marked the beginning of an epoch of persecution, especially in Jerusalem, where for some years peace had prevailed and the message of the Gospel found considerable root in the hearts of "Israelites indeed." The Lord allowed these new beginners to attain a fair degree of development in grace and knowledge, and then permitted the persecution which scattered them everywhere throughout Judea and Samaria. The effect was that, so far from the truth being injured, it was carried to larger numbers, for every true disciple is a light-bearer. Saul was one of the chief persecutors, apparently. We read that he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and, armed with the necessary legal authority, he effected the imprisonment of many, and thus led to the scattering of others. But in some unaccountable manner this persecution seems to have passed by the apostles. The Lord probably wished to keep Jerusalem as the center for the Apostolic ambassadors of the truth for a season.

The lesson for us all is faith, courage, zeal, a loyal heart, a shining face, love and prayers for our enemies, and to see that we learn a lesson from the evil course of others, "See that no man render evil in return for evil," as the Apostle says.

The fact that the Jews had not power to put our Lord to death, but did have the power to stone Stephen, is explained by the fact that stoning to death for blasphemy was the divinely instituted punishment, according to the law. But the Jews, being subject to the Romans, were not permitted by them to exercise the death penalty. Following the death of our Lord, Pilate was ordered to Rome to stand trial on certain charges brought against him and thus the Roman power in Palestine was somewhat abated, and the Jews, in the absence of a dominating force, exercised their own laws.

"THY MONEY PERISH WITH THEE"

ACTS 8:4-25.—FEBRUARY 28.

GOLDEN TEXT:—"And the people with one accord gave heed to those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did."—Acts 8:6.

Our preceding lesson told us of the zeal and faithfulness of Deacon Stephen. Today's lesson deals with the faithfulness of Deacon Philip, who was one of those who fled from Jerusalem under the persecution which arose following Stephen's death. He went to live in the city of Samaria, and, his earthen vessel being filled with the holy Spirit, he was a burning and shining light there, and speedily many of the Samaritans believed in Christ. The gift of miraculous healing and casting out of demons attested that Philip was a servant of God, and, as was intended, served to draw attention to the message which he delivered. He healed the sick, cast out demons, and thus caused great joy.

Simon, the magician of Samaria, had long been a spirit medium amongst them, practising witchcraft, sorcery, the black art. His power had been recognized, and he himself had been free to claim personal greatness because of the power of the demons exercised through him. But now the power of Christ being brought into sharp contrast with the demoniacal power and works, the people of Samaria recognized this promptly. Many of them made a full surrender to the Lord and were baptized. Amongst these was the magician himself. Deacon Philip was not the Apostle Philip, and hence was unable to confer the gifts of the holy Spirit upon others, which was an Apostolic privilege exclusively. He therefore sent to Jerusalem,

and forthwith Peter and John went to Samaria and laid their hands upon the believers, and imparted to them the miraculous gifts which were a part of the Lord's provision for the church at that time. Not only for the convincing of outsiders, but also for the uplifting of each other in their meetings, the gifts of tongues and interpretation of tongues were given, serving practically as instead of the written Word of God.

We remember that they were the same John and Peter to whom our Lord a few years before had said, "Into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not" with the Gospel, "for I am not sent, save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And this is the same John who, with his brother James, was refused the privilege of purchasing bread for their needs, and asked our Lord, "Wilt thou that we command fire to come down to consume these men and their city?" We remember our Lord's answer, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of. The Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

Now we find John quite willing to join with Peter in recognizing the Samaritans as brethren—fellow-members of the one body of Christ; and very willing to confer upon them the gifts of the holy Spirit. What a change, and why? Ah, John was seeing things from a different standpoint. He was no longer actuated by a pride for his Master that would have been willing to destroy his enemies, but now, controlled with a spirit of love, he realized that the Samaritans and all mankind were under the blinding power of the adversary, and he was as anxious to save their lives as he had been previously willing that they should be destroyed. And is it not so with each one of us? In proportion as we have received the Spirit of Christ, we have learned what love and sympathy towards fellow creatures really mean. We, like the apostles, are drinking of the same spirit which controlled our Master.

But why should the Lord bless Philip's preaching at this time, when previously he forbade any preaching of the Gospel to the Samaritans? The explanation is found in the dispensational change which had meantime occurred. "The middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles had been broken down." It crumbled at the end of the seventieth week of Jewish favor, three and a half years after the cross, Cornelius being the first Gentile convert. This preaching at Samaria was probably three years after the conversion of Cornelius. The Samaritans claimed a relationship to the Jewish Law Covenant, but, as our Lord explained to the woman of Samaria, their claim was fraudulent. They were as separate from the covenants and promises of Israel as were the other Gentile nations. To this day the Samaritans hold to their old traditions and claim to have a high priest, but entirely without right or authority.

As the old Law Covenant given through Moses was wholly Jewish, Israelitish, and as the New [Law] Covenant to be instituted by Messiah (Head and body) will be wholly Israelitish, and as the original Abrahamic (Sarah) Covenant blessed only those who exercised the faith of Abraham, it follows that such of the Samaritans as came truly into Christ became spiritual Israelites, while the others, like all the Gentile nations, will during the Millennium have the opportunity of becoming naturalized, fleshly Israelites under Israel's New (Law) Covenant, as the only means of coming into harmony with God.

ANCIENT WORTHIES UNDER FAITH COVENANT

The question may arise, Under what covenant are the ancient worthies acceptable with God? Since they died before Christ and the opportunities of spiritual begetting, they were not favored with the high calling to membership in the body of Christ, the elect church. This the Apostle emphasized in Heb. 11:39-40. He informs us that they "pleased God," but that apart from us, The Christ, they shall not be made perfect. In the divine order the church is to be the first-fruits of God's creatures. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." (Jas. 1:18) Notice further that the Apostle's list of these includes Abel and Enoch, before the flood, and before even the Abrahamic Covenant was made. It also includes some who lived during the period of the Law Covenant, and who were therefore under it. How, then, should we classify these, as respects the three great covenants, represented by Sarah, Hagar and Keturah?

The matter becomes very simple when we recognize the prime distinction between the Abrahamic Covenant and the Law Covenant that was added to it. The first was of faith, not without works. The second of works, not without faith. As the Apostle says, the conditions of the Law Covenant were, "He that doeth these things shall live by them." (Rom. 10:5) We are also reminded that the Sarah Covenant is of faith and

"SIMONY" IN OLDEN TIMES AND NOW

When the sorcerer, Simon Magus, beheld the Apostolic power—that by the laying on of the hands of the apostles miraculous gifts were imparted to the believers—he offered them money, if they would confer upon him this Apostolic power. Apparently his mind had assented to what he had heard and seen, but his heart was not radically changed. He did not appreciate the matters in which he had a share as one of the believers. It took the Apostle's sharp word to awaken him to a realization of the fact that he was now dealing with God and holy things, and that his failure to appreciate this implied that he was not begotten of the holy Spirit. St. Peter said to him, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord if, perchance, the thought of thine heart shall be forgiven thee, for I see that thou art in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity."

It is not for us to judge the heart, although we are commanded to judge the outward conduct and to discern the difference between the true Vine and its grapes, and the thorn-bush and its thorns. Without attempting to judge the hearts of any, we suggest to all the wisdom of seeing to it that nothing like the spirit of Simon Magus gain any control over us. This may be a special danger in this our day when the power of money is so great. As material things are all moved by the lever of wealth, it is not surprising that many conclude that the world's conversion is merely a matter of dollars and cents, and that those who control the money are the real masters of the situation. There may indeed be some who pride themselves in their money power and who think of it as having authority and direction in the work of the Lord. Let such beware of "Simony." Let them beware of the Apostle's words, "Thy money perish with thee." We are not of those who despise money. But it must be recognized as a servant of the Lord and of the truth, and not as a master—not as a controlling force. To thus estimate it is to dishonor the Lord and to show that we have failed to grasp the spirit of his truth.

Our Golden Text refers thus to Philip's preaching: "He preached Christ." Some dear Christian people make the mistake of preaching on sociology, the beauties of nature, the things of the world. Others continually dabble with errors and errorists. Such things may have their time and place in connection with the message; but all who would serve the Lord should remember that we are commissioned to preach the Gospel of Christ only. Christ and his message constitute the light which came into our minds—the light which we are to let shine for the blessing of others. The darkness hateth the light and battles against the light; but the light is to keep on shining. Thus said our Lord, "Let your lights so shine before men that, seeing your good works, they may glorify your Father which is in heaven." There it is again. The light is not merely the message which we bear upon our lips, but also the influence which emanates from our daily lives. More and more we are convinced that the will of the Lord is that his message shall be borne by those who are pure of heart. "Be ye clean that bear the message of the Lord's house."

of works, but that where the faith is right, the works will "attest" the faith, even though they be not perfect; and that if judged by our works we would be condemned. The entire Jewish nation failed in the covenant of "works of the law;" yet a few individuals of that nation, rising by their faith superior to that covenant, trusted not to it, but to the original Covenant of Mercy, Grace—the Sarah Covenant. These are the ancient worthies mentioned by the Apostle. He specifies that it was by faith they did and endured. According to their works they were condemned by the Law Covenant, but according to their faith they were acceptable to God, along the lines of the Sarah Covenant, even though they could not receive their blessing under it, until first the promised seed should come and the blood of that covenant be shed. Similarly Enoch and Abel, because of their faith, were acceptable to God and listed with the faithful of the Law Covenant, as in divine favor, and subject to the blessing of the Sarah Covenant, because, although they lived before Abraham, they had the Abrahamic faith in the sense that, like Abraham, they trusted God for the grace which he is willing to bestow upon those who love him and seek his favor.

The New Covenant will really be a New Law Covenant, or a New Covenant of works of the law. The old or first Law Covenant was faulty and insufficient for Israel, not because the di-