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Upon the Earth Distress with Perplexity

(Luke 21:25.)

THE TROUBLED WORLD'S HOPE.

WHILE it was the hope of many that, when the great war was concluded, Millennium conditions would soon prevail, class distinctions were to cease, everyone was to have an opportunity of earning an honest living without too much "sweat of the face," how differently it has all turned out. Instead of bringing in righteousness and peace, the war seemed to loosen the standard of morals, and the world is more wicked today than it was before 1914, perhaps we may correctly say than it ever was. Instead of amity betwixt classes, strikes and labour troubles have increased, and there is a deadly, stealthy undermining of principle being continually carried on throughout the world, while the anarchistic spirit is gradually eating its way among all nations. Unemployment is prevalent everywhere. The overcrowded parts of the world are puzzled to know what to do with the great surplus of population.

On the one hand, the wonderful inventions and discoveries that are continually being made open up a vision of comfort, luxury, and even freedom from, many of the dread diseases which have so long preyed upon the human race, such as cancer, tuberculosis, etc.

On the other hand, there are the murderous inventions of destruction, submarines, airships, air torpedoes, poison gases, etc. What a day of possibilities for good in all this increased knowledge in every department of life, and yet, what a day of dread probabilities, because of man's greed, selfishness, ambition, and strife. Who can doubt the outcome of all we see about us? There is no human force able to control present-day influences. It seems almost as easy to resist the ebb and flow of the mighty ocean; mankind, like the mighty torrent of Niagara, sweeps on to the great fall, the precipice. The great systems of unrighteousness, trusts, unions, combines, and pools formed for selfish ends, and restricting the free commerce and liberties of the people, also the great religious systems with their manmade creeds and dogmas, which "fetter reason," and which drive men away from religion and hinder a true knowledge of God; will go down like a millstone into the sea.

All thinkers seem to see the dread prospects, but with all their good desires they cannot devise a way out of the trouble. Some suggest one thing, some another, but the best suggestions are only such as might postpone the evil day. The world is mad with selfishness and extravagant indulgence on the one side, while the submerged classes strive to carry on an existence with sweat of face and anxiety to provide for dependants.

Among all the remedies which have ever been suggested, and we have some splendid examples in old Grecian History, there has been nothing to equal the Law Covenant with Israel. There was an economy which, lived up to, would have resulted in a condition of righteousness, peace, prosperity, and health. The people with which this covenant was made were of the best stock among men, and no greater, nobler leader of men than Moses has ever been found in the world. The fact that it did not achieve the possible happy results demonstrated that mankind is incapable of lifting itself out of its troubles, and of establishing righteousness and peace, or, in other words, of bringing in the Golden Age.

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS.

Both the Old and New Testaments predict that a better time is coming: a time when justice and righteousness will be established in the earth, and peace abound everywhere. The apostle in Rom. 8:22, 19, speaks of the whole creation groaning and waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. Hag. 2:6-7 also speaks of the desire of all nations coming, but indicates a great shaking time preceding that event. "Yet once more will I shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land, and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come."

Peter, in his second epistle, chapter 3, speaks also of a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and also describes the great time of trouble preceding the establishment of same. He speaks of the "Heavens being on fire, and being dissolved. The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." It is clear that the apostle is speaking in figurative language, for if the earth and the heavens were literally to be so destroyed, there

would be no people left to enjoy the "new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," which he assures us is to follow the burning-up time, just as the prophet declares that after the great shaking "the desire of all nations shall come."

Peter simply refers to the destruction of the present order of things in a fiery time of trouble, just as the first heavens and earth, which were before the flood, had passed away. The "earth" refers to the social arrangements or order among men. The heavens refers to the spiritual or religious portion of humanity. These elements have both got out of accord with God and righteousness. The whole earth is ungodly and selfish, and the religious elements have become confused. In teachings and have lost the spirit of Christ, and have become worldly institutions. The Apostle Paul (Heb. 12:26-27), quoting Haggai, says, "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven, and this word yet once more signifieth the removal of those things that are shaken as of things that are made, that those things that cannot be shaken may remain."

Thus the apostle and the prophet refer to the woes of earth and the great remedy that God has provided, and which is soon to be applied. The declaration of the prophet that God will eventually establish a reign of righteousness in the earth which, when realised, will indeed be the desire of all nations, is 'borne out by the testimony of every prophet and apostle (Act 3:19-21), and cannot, therefore, be disputed by any who acknowledge the inspiration of the Bible.

The cause of all creation's groaning and pain is sin; for all the moral and physical degradation which directly or indirectly causes the pain and groaning of humanity is part of the wages of sin. Humanity is thus under a blight, and suffers both individually and as a whole. Its own imperfect and often unjust governments, as well as its aches and pains of body and mind, are the natural consequences of its imperfect, fallen condition; and although men can do something toward general improvement, their efforts are at best but feeble and spasmodic—they are utterly incapable of releasing themselves from their difficulties.

Truly, all mankind are groaning; and yet, as the apostle indicates, they are not hopeless; they are waiting for something, they know not exactly what—a panacea for sickness, pain, sorrow and death—

a just and righteous government, which will lift up the poorest and meanest from the mire of ignorance and squalor, to comfort and happiness.:’

What all mankind have longed and vaguely hoped for, God, through His prophets, has clearly and definitely foretold; and, further, He has shown exactly how it will be achieved, namely, through the agency of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, nineteen centuries ago, redeemed mankind by giving His life as a ransom-price for the life of the world, and who will shortly set up His kingdom and establish His authority over the redeemed race.

The only hope for the world is in this Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is God’s long-promised remedy. Man’s extremity will be God’s opportunity; “The desire of all nations shall come,” at a juncture when human ingenuity and skill will have exhausted themselves in seeking relief without avail. The present world-wide disorders are all factors in the “time of trouble,” the “day of vengeance,” with which this age is closing. Not only will it be a just recompense for misused privileges, but it will tend to humble the arrogance of men, making them “poor in spirit,” and ready for the great blessings God is about to pour upon all flesh (Joel 2:28). Thus He wounds to heal.

God’s Kingdom will be established in due time, when He “whose right it is,” will “take the Kingdom.” Yes, He, who bought it with own precious blood, will “take unto Himself His great power and reign.” Force will be used—“He shall rule them (the nations) with a rod of iron—as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers” (Rev. 2:27). He will gather the nations, assemble the kingdoms, and pour upon them His fierce anger, and the whole earth shall be devoured with the fire of His jealousy; then, when they are humbled and ready to hear and heed His counsel, He will turn unto them a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord to serve Him with one consent (Zeph. 3:8-9).

Not only will the Kingdom ‘be established with force, and be a power that men cannot resist, but it will so continue throughout the 1000 years of Christ’s reign, which is for the specific purpose of vanquishing the enemies of righteousness. “He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet,” “-His enemies._ Ulan lick-the dust,” “The soul that will not hear (obey) that prophet (the glorious Christ—antitype of Moses) shall be destroyed from among the people’ (in the Second Death). 1 Cor. 15:25; Psa. 72:9; Acts 3:23.

Satan will be bound; his every deceptive and misleading influence will be restrained, so that evil shall no longer appear to men to be good, nor good appear undesirable, and evil; truth shall no longer appear to men untrue, nor falsehoods be caused to appear true (Rev. 20:2).

The reign of Christ, however, will not be one of force only, but side by side with the rod of iron Will be the olive branch of mercy and peace for all the inhabitants of the world; who, when the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth, will learn righteousness (Psa. 26:9). The sin-blinded eyes shall be opened, that the world may see right and wrong, justice and injustice, in a light quite different from now—in “seven-fold” light (Psa. 30:26; 29:18-20). The outward temptations of the present will be suppressed, evils will neither be licensed nor permitted, but a penalty sure and swift will fall upon transgressors, meted out with unerring justice ‘by the glorified and competent judges of that time, who, nevertheless, will have compassion upon the weak.—1 Cor. 6:2; Psa. 96:13; Acts 17:31; Mal. 3:5.

OBSTACLES TO BELIEF IN CHRIST’S KINGDOM.

All this would seem reasonable to thinking people but for two reasons. -One is, the unscriptural view which for centuries has predominated, that Christ is now reigning over and ruling the world. And yet, if versed in the world’s history, all candid minds must admit that up to the present time there has not been a rule of righteousness such as the prophets predicted of the reign of Christ (Isa. 32:1). On the contrary, it is manifest that the kingdoms of this world are all under the power and subject to the invisible “prince of this world,” Satan, who takes advantage of the darkness of human ignorance,

superstition, and depravity.

Poor, frail humanity has indeed made some noble efforts at self-government, but the unseen and unrecognised powers of darkness have been too much for their efforts, and have succeeded in keeping in power a majority who were not lovers of righteousness. Nor can we hope for better than present results while selfishness remains the, rule of action.

The second reason lies in the long delay before the establishment of Christ's Kingdom. People naturally wonder that God has not long since exerted His great power to suppress sin, and to lift mankind out of its present state of depravity, disease and death; and since Dearly six thousand years have passed without such an interposition, many reason that God's future dealings should be judged by the past. Hence they conclude eve cannot expect such a rule or kingdom in the future, believing that all things must continue as they are now, and have been from the foundation of the world.

We answer, it can be shown that the Scriptures teach that not only has God promised such a Kingdom for the purpose of blessing the world, but He has also foretold the long period intervening in which evil has been permitted, good and sufficient reasons being given in the Bible for the nearly six thousand years that have elapsed. Yet, in examining these reasons for the apparent delay in the establishment of the reign of righteousness, let us not forget that it is only measured by the shortness of the present life that six thousand years seem very long; with God, "a thousand years are but as yesterday" (Psa. 90:4). When clearly seen, this should remove every obstacle to belief in the promised Kingdom of blessing.

WHY- THE LONG DELAY?

The long delay and its purposes are clearly marked in the Scriptures. Over four thousand years after the first promise of deliverance, given in Eden (Gen. 3:15), the redemption was accomplished on Calvary. Nearly two thousand years more fill the measure of the Gospel Age (the period between Christ's first and second advents), during which time God is selecting and developing the Church—the Bride of Christ. Furthermore, this long period of six thousand years was designed to give the race a necessary experience with the dreadful effects of sin, its exceeding sinfulness, and the firmness of that justice which will by no means clear the guilty violators of God's just and holy law. Such an experience will be of inestimable value to all for all eternity and by contrast it will lead to so great an appreciation of righteousness, during Christ's reign, as to make it, when realised, what the prophet predicted—"The desire of all nations."

The delay, from the time of the redemption to the Kingdom Age, while fulfilling this purpose to the world, serves particularly the further purpose—the development of the Church, a "little flock" of believers in and followers of Christ, sharers of His reproach in the present time, and therefore chosen and counted worthy to share His spiritual Kingdom, His glory, and His work—to reign with Him as joint-heirs of the long-promised Kingdom of God for the blessing of all the families of the earth.— Gen. 28:14; Gal. 3:16, 29.

During the Messianic Age, Christ's power will be exercised to prevent deceptions, clear away ignorance, strengthen the weak, and restore to sight those now blinded by the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4). A thousand enticements to sin, which now make special appeal to the depraved appetites of the fallen race, will not be permitted when the new, heavenly rule is established; but the Gospel Church—the Kingdom--class—is called and tested during this age, while evil is permitted to hold sway, in order that their proving may be like that of gold tried in tile fire. This company will be complete when the Gospel Age ends, and then the control of earth will be entrusted to them, under and in cooperation with the Lord Jesus, the King of Kings.-1 Cor. 6:2; Rom. 8:17.

PRESENT SO-CALLED CHRISTIAN KINGDOMS

During the first century of its existence the church held firmly to the apostolic teaching and waited for

the second coming of the Lord Jesus, to bring the establishment of the long-promised kingdom of (sod, with its rule of righteousness.?

_That first century was the period of the church's purity and fervour, before she left her first love. As time passed, and the expected Lord came not, the love of many waxed cold, and their hopes turned in other directions. Then, as Christianity became formalistic, Grecian philosophers came into the church, and the doctrines of Christ became blended with heathen mythologies, producing the great apostasy, or falling away from the true faith (2 Thes. 2:3). Nevertheless, there was always a faithful though small minority, which clung to the truth; for the Lord has never left His truth without witnesses.

It was at this time that, the degenerated Christian system conceived the view commonly held since, that the church was to establish Christ's Kingdom upon the earth, without waiting for her Lord's return, and that Christ would come after the Millennial reign of the church had ended—to approve the work. This view introduced into the nominal church an aggressive political policy, under which the church sought influence and affiliation with the civil power. As a result, Papacy was developed, and in time became the mistress and queen of nations.—Rev. 17:3-5; 18:7.

By this policy, everything was changed; instead of suffering, came honour; instead of humility, came pride; instead of truth, came error; and instead of being persecuted, she became the persecutor of all who condemned her new and illegal honours. Soon she began to invent new theories and sophistries to justify her course, first deceiving herself, and then the nations, into the belief that the promised reign of Christ had come, and that Christ, the King, was represented by her popes, who reigned over the kings of the earth as His vicegerents Her claims were successful in deceiving the whole world. She made all nations “drunk” with her erroneous doctrines, or mental imbecility will be able to resist His doctrines (Rev. 17:2), intimating them by teaching that healing touch. eternal torment awaited all who resisted her claims. Soon the kings of Europe were crowned or deposed by her edict, and under her assumed authority.

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PEOPLES PAPER.

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While it is our intention that these columns be used for teachings strictly in accord with the Lord's Word, we cannot accept responsibility for every expression „sed, either in the correspondence or in the sermons reported.

A Cross (a) on the wrapper indicates that the Subscription to “ Peoples Paper” is overdue.

CONVENTION NEWS.

CHRISTIANS are exhorted at all times, "In everything to give thanks." Especially here the Melbourne Brethren desire to render praise and thanksgiving for the blessed 'privilege of having been permitted again to assemble in convention with those of like faith this Christmas season. How freely the friends expressed the general helpfulness and encouragement experienced throughout the period, and how graciously our Lord blessed the assembly with that "meat in due season" promised so liberally to all those that gather with oneness of heart and sincerity of purpose, in spirit and in truth. How pleasing to note that each and all sought to the utmost to be found doing their part in realisation and appreciation of their responsibility and privilege, and throughout endeavoured to have nothing undone in order to obtain the highest possible blessing. and see that everything was in preparation for the consideration and enjoyment of the brethren generally. Surely it was a time of mutual uplift and encouragement, and the earnest desire of all the friends was that they might, by God's grace and help, seek to leave no stone unturned, whereby the new year would find in them a greater development in the character-likeness of Christ, and a larger growth in the fruits and graces of God's Holy Spirit.

The Melbourne brethren particularly desire to thank their Heavenly Father for the blessings received at the hands of the visiting brethren, as they would travel many miles in order to be present, and, with mutual fellowship, seek to spend and be spent in the service of God and the cause of truth and the brethren.

We pray God's blessing in richest measure upon them in their loving zeal, earnestness, and desire to make the meetings profitable and uplifting.

Throughout the season the studies and addresses were such as would impress deeply the great need of stability of character, and steadfastness in the narrow way of sacrifice, especially in this evil day, when iniquity so much abounds, and an indifferent, lukewarm condition, predicted to be in evidence, prevails in the lives of those brethren not living up to their full privileges under their vow .or "covenant of sacrifice," to 'be dead to this world's aims, hopes and, ambitions, and instead only and ever "alive toward God."

We were particularly reminded in one of our Bible studies that we have been figuratively raised with Christ to newness of life, and made to sit in heavenly places with Him, henceforth not to serve sin, 'but to realise that old things have passed away and that the Lord's people are to be found setting their affections on heavenly things, counting everything else as but "loss and dross" in comparison with the rich hope of our inheritance with our Lord in the glorious kingdom. We were reminded, also, that the course had yet to be completed, and the race finally run, before the precious prize of immortality and association with the Bridegroom could be obtained, and to this end it was 'forcibly brought to mind in another of our studies, the necessity of using our every talent faithfully, zealously, and loyally, as required in stewards, and according to our Lord's own parable of the Talents, which is such a warning and reminder to all of His followers of their individual responsibility and privilege. In this connection we saw that in the use of our every talent, care must be taken that the same be manifested and exercised in the true spirit of humility and love, that the "spirit of a sound mind" be sought at all times as we endeavour to fulfil our part for the welfare of the Body- members, realising that all that was done was to be considered primarily as "done unto our Head."

In the closing address of the Convention, our brother particularly 'brought to our attention the necessity of "waiting patiently on the Lord," and being guided only by the dictate of our Head. He reminded us of the importance of a well grounded faith, without which it is impossible to please God, and that this faith of ours would be tried, tested, and exercised to the full through the fiery experiences that must, and will, surely try us if we are to be purified and found unto praise and honour at the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. All present realised the importance of "waiting patiently for Him," as they would seek to have that refining influence brought about in the life as the

experiences would be humbly submitted to, with cheerful endurance and constancy of faith and hope, knowing that in this way the peaceful fruits of righteousness would surely be developed on account of being rightly exercised in and by those experiences.

Perhaps one of the most pleasing, encouraging, yet solemn moments enjoyed during the Convention season, was the occasion set aside for a baptism service at West Hawthorn, on the Saturday morning. All rejoiced as they would assemble to witness in symbol that true consecration of two of the dear brethren who so beautifully desired, before an assembly of the Lord's people to give evidence, by immersion in water, of that true "death 'baptism," which had preceded it. Surely in this witness each heart rejoiced with our dear sister and brother, as the service would serve further to bind still closer our hearts in Christian love and unity with that blessed seal of sonship.

In recording the happy season of fellowship, we would not overlook again the Lord's favour and blessing as we availed ourselves of the kindness and hospitality of a brother and sister in inviting us to their home at Heidelberg for the Saturday afternoon and evening. Here again full opportunity was taken of enjoying sweet Christian fellowship, and also. the natural beauty and freshness of the locality and surroundings. During the evening we were encouraged and exhorted by the words of the Apostle Paul, in Phil. 4:8, to think, and think deeply, on those things which are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report, provided that these were in every way praiseworthy; and so the happy outing ended with thanks to our Heavenly Father for His rich provision, so often manifested at the hands of one or another of His faithful people.

May God grant that the lessons and experiences gained during the happy Convention season will bring forth fruit abundantly in honour to our Head, and to the praise and glory of our loving Heavenly Father.

It was a pleasure, also, to hear from our Sydney brethren of the very helpful and profitable season of fellowship 'and communion with the Lord and each other, experienced by them at their two days' convention, held on Saturday and Sunday, 27th and 28th of December.

While separated by many miles from our fellow-brethren in Christ during the assembling in convention, it is very evident from the word to hand, that the same spirit of the Lord was richly bestowed and fully realised as they gathered with the purpose of honoring the Lord with praise and thanksgiving, and encouraging each other to continually add to their faith the necessary virtues, that will enable all to remain true and faithful to Christ and His truth in this evil day.

The gatherings were held at Rawson Chambers, Pitt Street, the usual meeting rooms of the Sydney class, and although numbers were not large, it was encouraging to the friends to have with them several brethren who had travelled long distances to be present. Such a spirit of zeal and sacrifice for the Lord's people and cause of truth is surely very pleasing to our heavenly Father; and the addresses given by the visiting and local brethren, together with the testimony and fellowship meetings, were realised to be a means of cementing the friends closer together in the unity of the spirit, and in the bonds of Christian love as body members in the faith and truth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We trust that the recording of the blessings and encouragement received at these convention gatherings may serve to strengthen our fellow-brethren in Christ everywhere, and particularly those in isolation, who were remembered in thoughts and prayers before the throne of heavenly grace.

BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH.

(Convention Baptism Service).

PERHAPS we can safely say that no subject is more helpful, encouraging, and a means of blessing than that for which we are now assembled. How beautifully significant and realistic to the true child of God are the words of the Apostle Paul, in Rom. 6, as he would present the matter so fully and forcibly, and apply this subject of baptism in addressing fellow-members in Christ. We rejoice because of the privilege we have of gathering as we would witness ill picture and symbol that desire of heart and purpose of will that has already taken place in the life of our dear brother and sister through that real consecration to death, to which the words of the Apostle refer, and to which we have ourselves joyfully responded, and as they would relate and apply only respecting those who have already consecrated themselves in line thereto.

Let us keep in mind that water baptism is not the real baptism or immersion into Christ as so many of the various sects and denominations would suppose, for be it noted that in the (above) verses by the Apostle in the 6th chapter of Romans, not one word is in reference to water baptism, but he addresses those who have consecrated to be dead with Christ and planted in the likeness of His death, having been baptised into His death, beautifully representing the burial of the human will and henceforth to accept only the will and dictation of their Lord and Head. To this class the Apostle elsewhere states that old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new. If then this death and burial of the old will and raising to newness of life represents the true baptism and consecration of the Christian, what does this baptism or immersing in water represent to us? We do well to view the question in the light of Scripture as it would apply to our Captain and Head and High Priest of our profession. We remember that our Lord on reaching manhood's estate, 30 years of age under the law, hastened to make a total surrender in full consecration of all earthly hopes, aims, and ambitions, that the Father's will only might be done in Him. How in Psa. 40:7-8, the language of His heart was prophetically foretold, as He presented Himself at Jordan, "Lo, I come, in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, to do Thy will, O God. I delight to do Thy will, O my God, Thy law is within my heart." Our Lord, thus consecrating Himself to the Father's will, realised that His outward baptism symbolised the surrender of His earthly life and nature, already immersed or buried into His Father's will, even unto death. Thus the immersion in the waters of Jordan at the hands of John the Baptist was merely in symbol a pictorial representation of the baptism, burial or consecration of His will which had preceded it. Only our Saviour understood fully the purpose of His coming to Jordan for baptism, for John knew not the reason why such immersion should be necessary respecting this sinless Son of God. Our Lord's words to John the Baptist, "Suffer it to be so now, for so it becometh Me to fulfil all righteousness," seem to clearly show that He well knew that the immersion in Jordan was only a symbol or picture of that consecrated heart of His, which, unto death, would be found fulfilling the righteous requirements of His heavenly Father as the Saviour of mankind, through the laying down of His life in obedience and sacrifice, and, in consequence of such faithfulness, be raised again by the power of Jehovah.

The fact that our Lord did not view the immersing at Jordan as the real baptism is further evidenced by His words subsequently toward the end of His earthly ministry and sojourn. "I have a baptism to be baptised with and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." How plainly our Lord shows that this was not a water baptism, but a real death baptism, in harmony with the divine arrangements and requirement, as man's redemption price and sin offering.

Noting then our Leader's example, happy are they who perceive that the closer we can emulate our dear Lord, the greater blessing and uplift will be experienced as we seek to follow in His steps, and the nearer we come into line with our Master's own life and experience, the richer will be our appreciation of that oneness that should, and must exist, in order that we all may grow up unto Him in all things, who is our Head.

Again, respecting this subject of the symbolic picture of the true baptism, the Apostle Peter in his 1st Epistle 3:21, gives us a good thought in presenting that matter. he says (taking Noah's Ark as a type of Christ), "The like figure whereunto even baptism cloth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." by the context that the Apostle had in mind the great deluge, and reminds us that all mankind perished in the flood, save eight souls, who were preserved from a watery grave by means of the Ark, which God provided for them. That ark, though encompassed by water, was their salvation. As the whole world perished in the great flood, so now the entire world of mankind is a dead world, a perishing world. The Lord's true followers were of that world, until they got out of it, through Christ. As Noah and his family were saved from death by coming into the ark in obedience to God, so the Church of Christ are saved from Adamic death by obedience to God in accepting His offer of salvation. Whoever then comes into Christ comes into safety and salvation, out of danger and destruction. All who come into this relationship to God are said to have "passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). If any man be in Christ. the Apostle Paul says. "He is a new creature," and of this new creation Christ is the first-born among many brethren.

Referring again to our text we notice that the Apostle says, "The like figure whereunto baptism cloth now save us." Salvation through the Ark was one figure of the salvation of the Church through baptism into Christ, baptism in water is another figure. What is the correspondency between these two figures? Noah and his family, while in the ark, are pictured by the Apostle as being submerged in literal water; candidates for baptism are also submerged in literal water, but in neither case was it the water that saved. So likewise it is not the outward observance that has saving power, except as a figure of the true baptism. It represents the real. But St. Peter assures us that the figure, picture, or symbol, is not in washing away the filth of the flesh in water, as this can only be accomplished by God's provision in Christ, by the washing of water by the Word, and is a gradual process after becoming new creatures in the Anointed One. So, then, the Apostle's words relate not to a baptism that either literally or figuratively washes clean the flesh, but to the answer or response of a good conscience toward God. Ah! Yes, what wondrous grace and love bath the Father bestowed upon those who have been so highly favoured of Him who bath called us, invited us, to a heavenly station, and have we not responded by gladly accepting God's will and purpose for us. Surely, then, we rejoice with our dear brother and sister as they would witness in symbol, before fellow members of the Body, that answer of a good conscience toward God, in which is pictured that earnest heartfelt and sincere desire to fulfil their covenant of sacrifice previously entered upon. Do we not render thanks to God, as time and again one or another of His consecrated children seek to pay their vows before the Lord in the presence of His people. What a stimulus and an encouragement it is to each of us, as brethren in Christ witness thus, and take their stand for the cause of truth, righteousness, and the brethren, and so we gladly rejoice with those who do rejoice. "Gather My saints together unto Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice" (Psa. 50:5). So then our surrender to the Lord was the answer of a good conscience toward God, for when He invited us to become living sacrifices through Christ, to be saintly followers of our Lord and Head, the answer of our conscience was, "Lord, we respond, we accept Thy gracious invitation." Was not that the answer or response of a good conscience; surely, as the Apostle says (Rom. 12:1), it is but our reasonable service.

St. Peter goes on to say that it all comes about through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. How clearly the Scriptures teach that if Christ be not raised, if there be no resurrection from the dead, then is our faith and hope exercised in vain, and our lives profit nothing. On the contrary, we learn clearly that our Lord has been raised by the power of the Father, and is the resurrection and the life, and the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Thus the Apostle Paul beautifully expressed the matter .as one who gratefully responded to God's call for him, as a specially chosen disciple to show forth the evidence and power of a truly consecrated life, and God's glory among the Gentiles. Harken to his words in Phil 3:10-11, "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

We who would fully appreciate this matter of real baptism in Christ, of which water is but a figure, will do well to realise, as did the Apostle, that only through Christ, our sufficiency, can the ultimate object of our baptism. in Christ be attained, viz.:—The resurrection from the dead, and our awakening in the likeness of His resurrection. How many have been hindered from making progress on account of seemingly relying upon their own efforts and strength to carry out their covenant of sacrifice, instead of allowing God to work in -them to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Only as we bend our wills to the will of God in Christ, and allow the great hand of the Potter to mould and shapen us as ‘vessels meet for His use, can we expect to be made vessels unto honour, and in so doing our Heavenly Father will .be pleased to grant us such opportunities. through special circumstances and conditions brought about, as we allow of a daily consuming of the sacrifice we have laid on the altar, and this with our every effort to co-operate in obedience with His will for us, and in patiently submitting to the trials by the way, will result in yielding up a sweet incense, acceptable to God through Christ, who has made all this possible, as we would go to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.

I laving in mind, then, that the symbolic burial witnessed here is a figure of a true death ‘burial, what a picture this is then of a baptism into death. Just as the candidate is lowered into the water and submerged, indicating the death condition of his own will, so the raising up out of the water pictures the one raised to newness of life. Such henceforth live not unto themselves, but unto Him who died and rose again, that they might live. Such count not their lives dear unto them, but seek daily to mortify or deaden their members, which are upon the earth, realising that if they live after the flesh, they shall die, but if they through the spirit of Christ do mortify the deeds of the body, they shall live.

Let us exhort one another daily respecting the step we have taken, and ever by precept, example and practice, endeavour to demonstrate to our fellow-members in the Body, that we fully are awake to the importance of what the real baptism into Christ signifies, that our one desire is to bury our own wills and accept the will of God in Christ, and just as our Lord came not to do His own will, but that of the Father, so we too may be found saying with the Apostle of old, “For me to live is Christ, and to die gain.” How glad we are, then, to assemble in honour of the ones who to-day in symbol have pictured to us that true evidence of an answer and sincere response of a good conscience toward God, who has been pleased to call them, also, with a high and holy calling, according to the good purpose of his grace.

May God richly bless this loyal indication of a heart given up wholly and unreservedly to the service of the great King of kings, and grant the grace sufficient that the sacrifice may lie consumed in His own time and way, and that such experiences may be brought to bear in their lives that, will enable that sweet .incense of an obedient life to ascend as a sweet smelling savor continually to Him.

Our Lord said, “He that putteth his hand to the plough and looketh back is not fit for the kingdom.”

“He that will seek to give his life shall lose it, but he that loveth his life forsake and the Gospel’s, shall find it unto life eternal.

“And what cloth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul; for what shall a man give in exchange for his soul.”

May God help us all to so number our days and apply our hearts unto wisdom, and in so, doing, surely He will cause His face to shine upon us, and give us that rest, peace, comfort and rich blessing, which the world cannot give neither take from us.

According to Thy gracious will,
This watery symbol here fulfil,
Like unto my clear Head.
In token of my earnest vows,
I sink beneath right here and now,
And rise as from the dead.
Lord, grant me all sufficient grace
To walk as to behold Thy face,
In newness of that life.
All earthly aims and hopes subdue,
As I my sacrifice renew,
In this my daily strife.
Accept my weak imperfect all,
As ever at Thy feet I fall In consecration sweet.
Blest Master, all I have is thine,
O cause my life for Thee to shine,
Until Thy glory it complete.

Correspondence

Dear Brother,

Greetings in the Master's Name, to whom be praise for ever. Just enclosing postal note for "Herald" subscription, which we believe is now due. I am, not sure, whether I acknowledged the receipt of the book, "Desolations of the Sanctuary." Some are getting their eyes opened to the true position, others of course are fast asleep. The letter in the "People's Paper" re Concordant teachings is only too true, and many are being deceived by these plausible deceptions. In fact, both the 1.1 I.S.A. and Concordant teachings seem to be coming from the same source; but the Lord's people should have their spiritual sense exercised to discern between good and evil, truth and error (Heb. 5:14). Hope you had nice convention during the holidays, and praying the Lord's blessing upon the work.

• Yours in the Master's service, B.H.J.

Dear Brother,

You will see by this that I am back home again and found things alright, and the family seemed very pleased to have me back again.

Needless to say, my thoughts have been running on the various meetings and gatherings we attended together, and I can say they have been a great blessing to me, and I believe to all concerned. It is a time I will never forget as long as I am in this tabernacle. The friends all seem to be one family, and that is God's will. There is no restraint but a fellowship of brotherly and sisterly love for all, which is in line with the teachings of God's word, as in Rom. 12:8-10. "Love one another, for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore, love is the fulfilment of the law. He that loveth his brother is in the light, and there is none occasion of falling in him" (1 John 2:10). "Hereby perceive we the love of Christ, because He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Love God, love the brethren, love one another. Three things, faith, love, works. Faith without works is dead" (Jas. 2:17, 20). Now these graces seem to me to be prevalent among our brethren, so with Christian love to them one and all, including yourself.

I remain,

Yours in His service, H.J.W.

It is my duty to distrust my own ability, that I may have reliance on Him that is stronger than all.—
J.B.

Look straight into the light, and you will always have the shadows behind you.—A.FW.I.

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