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Lest Ye Fall from Your Own Steadfastness.

“Ye therefore, beloved, seeing that 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.

THIS exhortation applies to the Lord's consecrated people living at the present time. The proof of this is found in the context: the apostle has just been portraying some of the events connected with the day the Lord in which we are living—the “day of vengeance.” In verse 10 he has pointed out that the present age will end with the dissolution of the symbolic “heavens” and the symbolic “earth,” which signifies the utter disruption of the present social and ecclesiastical order. In verse 13 he points out that we are looking for a new order of things, and not hoping either to patch up the old order ourselves, or that others will succeed in patching what the Lord has declared “shall pass away.” And now in our text he refers to “these things.” In the eleventh verse he points out that those who have such expectations should be separate and distinct from all other people in the world, saying: “What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?” And then in our text and in the verse preceding it he points out that at this particular time the Adversary will get advantage of certain ones, will beguile them, get them to wrest the Scriptures, and thus to deceive themselves to their own destruction—to their loss of present light at least.

Finding thus that the apostle is particularly addressing ourselves, let us indeed give earnest heed to his counsel. We notice further that the apostle is not addressing the worldly, nor even the average nominal Christian; but he specifies that his warning is to the “beloved,” who already have attained to “steadfastness.” This implies that they have become rooted and grounded and built up, both in the knowledge and in the love of God; for only such ever become steadfast. Does it surprise us that the apostle should address such a developed class of Christians and warn them of their own personal danger of falling into the “error of the wicked”? It does strike us as peculiar, and we are inclined to think that there must be some hidden meaning in the expression, “error of the wicked.”

It would be past comprehension that such a class as the apostle has just described should be in great danger of falling into such errors of the wicked as blasphemy, or murder, or arson, or theft. We must look the matter up more carefully, and see whether or not the translators have given us a correct rendering of the apostle's words. We find that they have not, and that the word wicked is too strong. The Greek word is *athemos*; according to Professor Young's Analytical Concordance (undisputed authority) it signifies “unsettled,” or “lawless.” Now, the passage seems more reasonable. There is danger, we can readily see, that those once established in the truth might be led away as to become unsettled, and to wrest the Scriptures, “handle the Word of God deceitfully,” and thus become lawless in the sense that they would set aside the Word or law of God, and take instead thereof a twisted interpretation which would the better suit some theory of their own. Such a wrong course, the apostle points out, would surely unsettle them, and eventually mean the destruction of their spiritual interests; and that they would go into “outer darkness” in respect of “present truth.” “Beware, lest ye also, being led away with the error of the unsettled, fall from your own steadfastness.”

The apostle's language not only points to the present time, but seems to imply that there would be previous fallings away or siftings, which he calls “the error of the wicked”—literally, “the delusions of the unsettled or lawless.” The implication seems to be that the not settled ones would first be shaken out, and that subsequently there would come a still more insidious trial which would test even the “steadfast.” We inquire, therefore, have there been, during this “harvest” time (whilst we are waiting for the dissolution of the present order of things and for the establishment of the new order of things)—have there been such siftings or fallings away by delusions which have affected those not settled?

We answer: Yes, there have been several: we might recount some of these. First of all came a shaking directly upon the subject of the ransom. Certain lawless ones, “heady,” rejected the testimony of the Lord’s Word, denying the Lord’s having “bought us” with His own precious blood. They would accept Christ as an example only, and claimed to be able to follow that example, and that they needed no sin-offering to • compensate for their imperfections, inherited or personal. This, the Adversary’s first move, was remarkably bold, yet it found adherents who were not rooted and grounded upon the testimony of the Lord’s Word. Then came the “flat earth” theory, whose advocates strangely concluded that the shape of the earth is a part of the gospel. The result was that certain others of the unstable were “led away” in that delusion, by not settled leaders who wrested certain Scriptures to their own confusion and to the extinguishing of the light they had enjoyed.

Then came another delusion, in effect teaching the old doctrine of Universalism—that God would finally force eternal salvation upon all men and even upon Satan himself. This theory, of course, also denied the ransom, because, to have admitted that the condemnation to death pronounced in Eden could not be set aside without a ransom, a corresponding price, would logically have implied that disobedience under a full trial secured by the ransom would similarly bring an everlasting punishment—everlasting death—from which there could be no resurrection. Hence, this theory boldly denied the ransom, wrested or twisted the Scriptures which speak of the second death as “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord,” handling this and other Scriptures so deceitfully as to declare that the second death would be a great blessing to all upon whom it would come. Of course, none but unstable souls could be beguiled by such open and arrogant perversions of the Word of God.

But still another sifting came for the “unlearned” and unsettled, not thoroughly furnished with the whole armor of God: this was the teaching that God is the author and instigator of all the sin, crime and wickedness there is in the world; and that after He shall become weary of evil doing He will reform, change His course and incite all mankind to righteousness and holiness, as He now (this theory claims) incites the majority to sin, etc. Of all the theories which the Adversary has brought out in this “evil day,” this one seems to be the most blasphemous. So-called “orthodoxy” is certainly quite blasphemous enough in claiming that God, after permitting His creatures to be “born in sin and shaken in iniquity” (which He had nothing to do with bringing upon them), claims that, as a punishment for sins which they could not avoid, the vast majority of the human family will be imprisoned in a flaming hell of unspeakable torture, and divinely provided with everlasting life, so that they shall never be able to escape those sufferings by death, and that the devil will be similarly supplied with eternal life (but free from pain) for the purpose of torturing them; and that fuel for the torture will to all eternity be provided by divine power. We say that this is extremely blasphemous of the divine character, yet it is as nothing at all in comparison to the teaching which claims that God is the instigator, the first cause, of all the sin and crime and wickedness in the world. Some Scriptures were also wrested to support this theory, just as

Spiritualists and Christian-Scientists do. Of course, only those who had never become thoroughly rooted and grounded in the truth could ever be “led away” by such a blasphemous delusion as this.

The Anglo-Israel question, and communistic and social questions “led away” from the truth, and into more or less darkness and confusion, some others who were not well rooted and grounded ‘in the knowledge of the fact that all present institutions will go clown, and that the new order of things to be introduced will not be of human institution, but the work of God through the glorified Christ. But the apostle comes in. our text to a time after such delusions had “led away” those not established or settled; and his warning is given to the steadfast. The implication seems to be that the Adversary has more subtle delusions before us than any of those in the past; and that the fully consecrated of the Lord’s people may need to be more than ever on guard against “the wiles of the devil.” “We therefore, -beloved, seeing ye know these things (that all of the affairs, reforms, etc., of the present time will avail nothing, and that all the present institutions will pass away, and that God is about to establish His own kingdom in His own way; and knowing further, that just at this particular time there will be a special sifting and testing of those who are in the light), beware, lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked (the unsettled or lawless, who do not bow implicitly to the Lord’s Word, but wrest it ‘to establish theories of their own), fall from your own steadfastness.” “While the “siftings” specially affect those who have been I brought by the Lord into the light of present truth, yet in a more general way and along different lines slightly different siftings are in progress with the nominal church as a whole. Each denomination is being shaken, and the theories of Evolution, Spiritism, Christian Science, Theosophy and Moralism are making great inroads upon all who have named the name of Christ, even if they have not come into the light of the “harvest” truth. Unsettled, lacking the knowledge of the Divine Word and plan, necessary in this evil day, the whole nominal church is gradually losing its faith in the Bible, under the lead of its most able ministers, who, blinded to present truths and unable to rightly divide the Word of Truth, are generally coming to hold the opinion that their own ideas respecting truth (“higher criticism”) are superior to the Scripture presentations.

The apostle in our text cautions that we beware against being “led away.” The word here rendered “led away” occurs in only one other place in the Scriptures (Gal. 2:13), where the Apostle Paul says, “Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.” The words “carried away” give the same thought as “led away,” but a little more strongly: they imply that the danger to the steadfast will be along some line which would sweep away or carry away their judgments from the fixed statements of the Divine Word, through personal preference, or sympathy, or through the influence of someone held in respect or esteem. Let us all, therefore, “be on guard, that whoever may, consciously or unconsciously, become the instrument of the Adversary, and seek to lead us away from the sure testimonies of the Lord’s Word (whether congenial to our natural tastes or Uncongenial); we may not be “carried away,” but that we may be more determined than ever that

“To our Lord we will be true,
Who bought us with His blood.
Only Jesus will we know,
And Jesus crucified.”

While we see that the danger to the majority of God’s people will be through being “carried away” by sympathy, influence, etc., we must remember that this implies that there will be certain leaders of thought whose conduct will tend to carry away the others. It is not necessary for us to suppose that these leaders into error will knowingly and intentionally get wrong themselves, and carry away numbers with them into their ideas and lawless disregard for the testimony of the Lord, wresting its statements. We may rather assume that in a majority of instances these leaders will be themselves deceived; as the apostle expresses it—“deceiving and being (themselves) deceived.”-2 Tim. 3:13.

All who seek to teach the Divine Plan to others are exposed to peculiar temptations, so that the honor of serving the Lord and His people demands a correspondingly larger measure of the graces of the Holy Spirit, as well as of knowledge. The tendency of knowledge, as the apostle points out, is merely to puff up, make vain and conceited, and to become a temptation of the Adversary, to draw away followers after them. (Acts 20:30.) Whoever, therefore, would be an instructor of others, a mouthpiece of the Lord, should cultivate all the various graces of the Holy Spirit, including meekness; that these combined (love) with knowledge, may build up himself as well as build up those to whom he ministers. “Knowledge (alone) puffeth up, but love buildeth up.”-1 (“or. 8:1.

Let us not forget that there is a way, and one way only, whereby we may insure ourselves against falling into any of these traps of the Adversary. This insurance is not secured wholly by knowledge, although knowledge is a very important element in it: it is secured chiefly by obedience to the principles laid down in the Lord’s Word, and illustrated in the life and character of our Lord and His apostles. The same apostle who gives us this warning against falling from our own steadfastness, tells us in the same epistle (2 Pet. 1:5-12), “If ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

What things? Does he give us the particulars of this work of grace that will so insure us against falling that we shall receive the great prize? Yes. He tells us that it is by continually adding to our stock of the heavenly graces—“Add to your faith fortitude, and to fortitude knowledge, and to knowledge self-control, and to self-control patience, and to patience piety, and to piety brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love; for these things .being in you and abounding they will not permit you to be inactive or unfruitful in the knowledge (personal intimacy, acquaintance) of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Therefore, brethren, give the more earnest heed that you may make your calling and election sure, for if ye do these things ye shall never fall.”

The Unfailing One.

HE who hath led, will lead
All through the wilderness:
He who hath fed, will feed;
He who hath blessed will bless;
He who hath heard thy cry
Will never close His ear;
He who hath marked thy faintest sigh,
Will not forget thy tear.

He loveth always, faileth never;
So rest on Him, to-day, for ever!
He who hath made thee whole
Will heal thee day by day;
He who hath spoken to thy soul
Hath many things to say.
He who hath gently taught
Yet more will make thee know.

He who so wondrously hath wrought
Yet greater things will show.
He loveth always, faileth never;
So rest on Him, to-day, for ever!
He who hath made thee nigh
Will draw thee nearer still.
He who hath given the first supply
Will satisfy and fill.

He who hath given thee grace,
Yet more and more will send;
He who hath set thee in the race
Will speed thee to the end.
He loveth always, faileth never;
So rest on Him, to-day, for ever!
He who hath won thy heart
Will keep it true and free;
He who hath shown thee what thou art
Will show Himself to thee.

He who hath bid thee live,
And made thy life His own,
Life more abundantly will give,
And keep it His alone.
He loveth always, faileth never;
So rest on Him, to-day, for ever!

Then trust Him for to-day
As thine unfailing Friend,
And let Him lead thee all the way,
Who loveth to the end.

And let the morrow rest In His beloved hand;
His good is better than our best,
As we shall understand,
If, trusting Him who faileth never,
We rest on Him, to-day, for ever!

FR.H.

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EDITORIAL

JUDGING from articles in leading religious papers of England, it seems to be generally acknowledged that if the present trend of indifference to religion and church attendance continues, the churches will, in less than ten years’ time, have to close their doors. Principal Garvie a few months ago was reported as deploring the state of the churches which, he said, was obstructing missionary enterprise. Such voices are raised from time to time, and some prophesy and seem to hope for a great revival; but Churchianity and its empty forms and ceremonies and teachings that have so misrepresented the God of their worship, appears to be sickening unto death. While it is a sad condition of things, yet, it is exactly what the Scriptures have foretold. Peter spoke of “damnable heresies” which would be brought in after the decease of the apostles. Paul tells how that “in the last days men shall be lovers of their own selves rather than lovers of God, having the form of godliness (professing to be Christians) but denying the power thereof.” The Revelator shows how the Church in its last stage would reach this worldly lukewarm condition and be disowned by the Lord (Rev. 3:12). There are many who think the churches will yet revive and be the means of the world’s conversion. “We would have healed Babylon but he will not be healed.” It is good to hear voices of Aarm raised, honestly acknowledging errors and wrongs which have come about through false teachings. Canon Fancourt, in Auckland Cathedral, candidly declared “we have in the past misrepresented God,” and he could not say a truer word. The churches have inherited from the Dark Ages the many “damnable heresies” which have weaved a confusion and mystery around the Christian religion, which have made the Word of God of non-effect. It is truth that must conquer error, good that must overcome evil, faith that must take the place of superstition, and the knowledge of God that must banish ignorance, as the “Light that shall lighten every man that cometh into the world” shall dispel the darkness and gloom of sin and sorrow and death.

The trouble with the churches is that, while they have great classical and scientific knowledge, they hold so much error and understand so little of the true knowledge of God and His Word. How can they convert the world when they do not themselves understand the Gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation to them that believe?

The only foundation on which the true Church of Christ can stand is the truth, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” It needed no scholarship to understand the simple yet profound teachings of the Saviour. “The poor had the gospel preached unto them.” It was not then, nor has it been since, that many great, noble or learned have grasped the Gospel message.

It is a sorry thing to see numerous churches of various sects, creeds and theories all claiming to be the Church of Christ, yet mostly still steeped in the delusions of teachings hatched in the Dark Ages. Instead of trying to mend, to end, or to unite such systems of error, it would be better to Obey the Lord’s voice of Revelation: “Come out of her, my people.” It would be well to abandon the “old bottles,” which would, anyway, burst if the “new wine” (the present truth) concerning the coming new dispensation were to be poured into them.

The true Church can only be based on the Rock foundation, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” There was nothing in the teachings of Christ about such things as the Trinity, or that man has a soul that cannot die, or the wicked will be granted eternal life so that they can forever suffer torture. He claimed to be the Son of God and said, “My Father is greater than I.” He came to save that which was lost and dying. “Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life.” Those who wilfully continue in sin are to go into “gehenna” for destruction. “All the wicked will God destroy,” for He is able to destroy both body and soul in gehenna.

NOTICE.

Our attention has been drawn to the fact that from time to time certain letters are being circulated by people in Sydney and other parts, under the names of Berean Bible Students, Associated Bible Students, or some such titles.

We recognise the personal liberty and privilege of all to publish what they believe to be truth. We find, however, that some of our readers have received such letters, at first under the impression that they came from this office. They then noticed the variance of teachings and have written to us for explanations of statements so contrary to the matter which is contained in our columns. We wish all to know that we are not responsible for these emanations. All our publications are sent out from this office only, and under the title of the "Peoples Paper," or by the Berean Biblical Institute, Hawthorn, Melbourne.

FIRST FOUR RULES OF LIFE.

Add up your blessings—such a host! you surely must have more than most. With such a long impressive sum, no least excuse for feeling glum. Add "grit" and gladness to the rest, and you'll stand up to every test.

Subtract from all your calculations petty crosses and vexations; take away the times you fail, every temper, slight and wail, Shedding trouble, every fraction—that's the right use of subtraction.

Multiply by two or four advantages you had before, by keeping an adventurous mind, by seizing every chance you find; by laughter much more oft than sighing; by working, learning, hoping, trying.

Divide your wealth with poorer folk. You're strong enough to halve a pack that's weighing down some older back. You're kind enough to split in two the task a frail one has to do.

Add, subtract, multiply, divide! Remember this, whate'er betide; if to the first four rules you stick, you'll work out life's arithmetic!

The Closing of the Gospel Age.

We have been requested to present our views respecting the closing of the present Age, and the establishment of the Lord's Kingdom on the earth. While there are more essential matters, of faith and the working out of Christian character, yet we remember that the Lord upbraided the Pharisees because 'while they could daily discern the skies and foretell the weather, they failed to perceive the more evident signs about them indicating the times, and that they were living in the end of their Jewish Age and in the presence of the Son of Man, so that they "knew not the time of their visitation." —Luke 19:44.

The Lord also taught that a similar position would prevail at His second coming, "As in the days of Noah. .. they knew not until the flood came and took them all away, so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man." Just as truly as there was to be a flood in Noah's day, is there to be the "great time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation" prior to the inauguration of the new Age and Messiah's Kingdom.

In all the great Divine judgments of the past—the Flood, Sodom and Gommorrah, Egypt, and Jerusalem—God has forewarned His faithful people. How beautiful are the words of the Lord when proceeding to destroy Sodom, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do."—Gen. 18:17. Again, it is declared, "The Lord will do nothing but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7), and concerning the great time of trouble with which this Age ends the Apostle writes, "Ye brethren are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief." So, then, while we may not know the day nor the hour, we must "watch and pray" and discern the times in the light of the prophetic lamp if we would "know the time of our visitation."

Most of our readers realise that we are living in the "time of the end," and have been since about 1795-99. The wonderful increase of knowledge, means of locomotion and communication and wondrous other inventions, completely fulfil the prophecy of Daniel 12:1. 4. Likewise all the signs of our Lord's great prophecy. 24, Luke 17 and 21, are discernable to-day. 'I Master said, "When ye see these things, then know that the time is at hand," that generation shall not pass until all be fulfilled.

The difficulty generally is that we take too small a view of these things. So many seem to expect the Lord's coming and going to be like a flash of lightning, and everything to be consummated in a day. The Apostle Peter warns us in his second epistle, chapter three, to remember how much higher and greater are God's thoughts than our thoughts.

He says, "a day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." To understand correctly these things we must try and take the Lord's viewpoint. "The time of the end" covers quite a period, during which many events are to take place in the world, in connection with Israel and particularly in respect of the Church, for "the Harvest is the end of the Age."

It would be during this same period that Christ would again be present in the world preparing to establish His Kingdom, receiving the overcoming Church unto Himself that they may be with Him and reign with Him. The Harvest means a separating of the true Christian from the mere professing Christian. The Parable of the Talents indicates the Lord's first work with His people. The Gospel Age will be closed by all the Church being taken to be with Christ.

They will have been prepared for the great work of dealing with mankind, of leading all the willing and obedient up the highway of holiness—to receive the reward of eternal life which was forfeited by our 'first parents, and separating the 'incorrigibly wicked who will be destroyed in the second death, which work is shown in the parable of the Sheep and the Goats. —Matt. 25.

It seems very clear that Christ must be present for some time attending to this work, among the members of the Church. This is in accord with His own statement, that as there were "days of Noah" 'before the flood so there would also be "days of the Son of Man," prior to the great time of trouble with which this Age is to end. We believe it is reasonable to think that the "days of the Son of Man" will anyway be as long as were the "days of Noah," and that we have been some considerable time in these days. Daniel's time prophecies have reached their termination, viz., 1260. days, about 1796-99; 1290 days, about 1826-29; 1335 days about 1872-4. Also the seven times of the Gentiles ran out about 1914; yet the last members of the Church are still in the flesh and the Kingdom is not set up.

Some have thought that the words, "In the days of these kings shall the Lord God set up a kingdom," mean that the reign of Christ would commence as soon as the Gentile Times ended. That does not appear to be illogical, but rather that during the times of these Gentile kings God would select the heavenly kingdom class that should reign with

Christ. Throughout the ' Gospel Age, this Kingdom has been in course of preparation. Soon now, we believe, the last member in Christ will be glorified and then the great time of trouble will reach its climax, will break down the present systems, social and religious, that are out of accord with righteousness, and the humble the hearts of men and lead them to turn to the Lord, their only refuge and strength. The 1260 days of Daniel (or 3Y2 times) were to be days of persecution of God's people, and at the end of that period the Papal persecution was broken, when Napoleon took the Pope a prisoner to France. At the end of 1290 days, 30 years later, the Christian Church was awakened respecting the second coming of Christ by the Millerite movement, which terminated in 1844 in disappointment, because they expected Christ to come again visible to the human eye. He did not come that way, but as a glorious spirit-being. At the end of the 1335 days the present Lord had prepared the promised feast of Luke 12:37, the feasting on which is the "blessedness" promised to those at the end of that time.

Now the Lord is inspecting His people regarding the use of talents, and, at the same time; matters are working out in the world and with the Jews in preparation for setting up the Kingdom. When the Kingdom is established all the "little flock" to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the 'Kingdom will be with Christ in the throne (Rev. 3:21), for they are promised to reign with Christ 1000 years. Satan also will have been bound, for he is to be bound 1000 years.

Many think that 6000 years of human history are past, but we think not, but incline to the thought that when 6000 years are over the seventh 1000 years will be the reign of Christ, and will be the great antitypical sabbath, for which "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now, waiting for the manifestation of the Sons of God."—Rom. 8:22, 19.

Correspondence

The following extracts from letters of our brethren in the various States show true appreciation and thankfulness to the Lord, while rejoicing in the truth. A brother from a distant State writes:—

"Your welcome letter duly received and I thank you for same, and the kind expressions. Also many thanks for Vol.

1 and 'Voice' received safely. I have plenty of 'Perplexed Humanity's Only Hope,' but was out of the others. I like to have copies of 'The Voice' on the Divine Plan.

"Have just re-read the copy of January 1st 'P.P.,' and appreciate the encouragement to 'seek first the Kingdom of Heaven.' This must surely be our first and most earnest desire, but the trivial cares and pressing needs of our struggle for existence are always with us. I liked the thought given in a recent 'Herald,' that these everyday trials and apparently trivial details of our daily routine are being used by our all-wise and loving Heavenly Father as a grindstone to smooth and polish us. into shape. This is evidently so if we accept the Apostle Paul's words, 'All things work together for good to, them that love God.' These words must have been a source of great comfort to all God's children striving to be conformed to our 'Pattern.'

"'The Manna' of September 6th and comment are very encouraging. I would almost have lost heart in these isolated parts, and apparently useless life, only for such assurances of God's Word. I mean, this humdrum life I am living seems so trivial and useless in regard to giving much witness for the furtherance of God's Kingdom on earth; but I thank my Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus .Christ that I have learnt that sublime lesson that, if faithful in little things, we may be accounted worthy to help Him in the glorious future, when there will lie the unspeakable opportunity to do the great things in the restoration of mankind. May we be kept faithful in the little things which He gives us to do

One of our brethren in New South Wales writes as follows:-

"It is some time since I wrote to you last, but I have been receiving. the 'P.13,' regularly and always welcome its arrival, and trust you will always preserve that meekness of spirit which has characterised it in the past. "The last PPs." have been 'meat in due season,' and have contended for the faith, and also for the presence of our Lord—invisible to the world.

"May the Lord bless your labour of love and help you to show forth praise to His everlasting honour and glory.

“I visit the little class meeting at Rawson Chambers, Sydney, when opportunity offers. Enclosed herewith please find — toward the tract fund. Please remember Me in your prayers. Your brother in Christ.”

The following also shows how the truth is enjoyed by others of our readers, one having just received the free papers

“I am writing to let you know I have just finished reading and studying the lovely book, ‘At-one-ment Between God and Man,’ which you so kindly sent to me. I cannot tell you in words how much I enjoyed reading it. How beautiful the chapter entitled ‘The Undefined One,’ also the ‘Holy Spirit of God,’ but the chapters all through the book are most interesting. The book has been a great help and comfort to me, and I do pray to my Heavenly Father to help me to understand and make it plain to me.

“I will now, with God’s help, read and study ‘The New Creation’.”

“Just a line to thank you for the pamphlets, which I read and enjoyed, and sincerely hope you will send me some more soon, as I consider them of-immense value to the hungry mind. I would also like you to forward me Foregleams of the Golden Age,’ for which I enclose postal note for 3/-.”

Post-Resurrection Appearances.

“Attention has often been drawn to the fact,” Writes Rev. Gerard Sampson in a little volume of “Eucharistic Meditations for the Sundays and Saints’ Days of the Year,” “that in all the appearances of the risen Lord, He is never recognised by sight.”

“He is supposed to be a spirit, or a stranger, or a gardener. Not one of His disciples ever recognised, with His eyes, that it was Jesus. This is remarkably significant. The Jews and other enemies of Christ ceaselessly spread reports that the accounts given by the apostles and evangelists of our Lord were false, and had no historical truth in them. This applies not only to His miracles and sayings, but to the accounts of His resurrection and ascension. If the apostles and evangelists had made up the appearances of the Risen Lord out of their own heads, they would have composed very different accounts from those which the evangelists have given us. For instance, if it were not an actual fact, well known and authentic, that after the Resurrection our Lord did appear to many chosen witnesses, and that not one of them recognised Him, and that they all at first disbelieved the word of those who had seen Him; if this were not an historic fact, who would have invented it?”

The Gospel as Preached to Abraham.

THE word gospel signifies good news. There are parts or elements to the good news, however; there are first principles of the gospel of Christ (Heb. 6:1), and there are more advanced doctrines, also. For instance, when you became aware that you were a sinner, and learned that Jesus had become your ransom, and that as a result you might now approach God through faith in the righteousness of Christ, and that by-and-by, in God's due time, all marks of sin would be removed, and the willing and obedient among the human family would be lifted up to actual perfection, that was good news for you: it was the basis of your harmony and friendship with God. It was the same thing which centuries ago was good news to Abraham. Paul tells us, "Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3). What good news did God communicate which Abraham believed? The gospel . . . saying,

"In thee shall all nations be blessed." The process by which all nations were to be blessed was not understood by

Abraham, except that it should be through his offspring, but he believed the fact without knowing how. We are made acquainted with the manner in which the blessing comes, viz.: that Jesus was (through Mary) the seed of Abraham, and as such gave His life a ransom for all men: that, as a consequence, in due time all men will be released from all the ills which come through sin.

Yes, the restitution from Adam's sin—the justification of humanity by Christ's sacrifice, was the good news to Abraham, to us of the Gospel Age, and is to be good news to the whole world in the next Age, for it is to be testified "in due time" (1 Tim. 2:6). It is the message that is called "the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth and to every nation and kindred and tongue and people" (Rev. 14:6).

But there is another phase of the good news (gospel) which belongs exclusively to this Gospel Age, something "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now (during this Gospel Age) revealed unto His saints and prophets (public expounders) by the Spirit" (Eph. 3:5). This special good news is, that since Jesus' sacrifice, God is calling out from the world of humanity, some to become the Bride, the Lamb's wife—to "become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4), to cease to be men and become "new creatures in Christ Jesus" (2 Cor. 5:17), and as such to be "Heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord." This is "our high-calling" of God, which we are to make sure of, by crucifying and sacrificing the human nature. This is the prize for which we seek—"glory, honor, and immortality." •

But these prizes were not offered to Abraham: he was not told about the joint-heirship, nor about sitting in the throne, nor about immortality. No, these were not made known in past ages. "Jesus Christ . . . brought Life and Immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10), Nor will this high calling be made during the future ages, for the "body of Christ" will be completed in this age. The Bride will be developed, and the marriage of the Lamb will come when his wife hath made herself ready (Rev. 19:7).

So we see that we get all that Abraham got, viz., justification by faith from Adamic sin, and in addition are invited to become a part of "The Seed which is Christ" (Gal. 3:29). Abraham was the father of this seed in a certain sense.

Jesus was anointed of the Spirit—"the Lord's anointed"—and this, we have seen, is the meaning of His title, Christ; and all who become members of the Christ must be made partakers of the Holy Spirit—anointed. Now we want to show that none were ever thus anointed before Jesus, and if this be the case none ever were members of His body before this age.

David is called the Lord's anointed, but he was anointed of Samuel with the anointing oil to the office of king; but both David and the oil were types. The oil is a type of the Holy Spirit, and David a type of Christ in his office of king. Aaron was the Lord's anointed also, but he, too, was anointed only with the typical oil and was himself a type of Christ in his office of priest. The Spirit of God (Holy Spirit) came upon the prophets during the Jewish Age, but in a different way entirely and for a different purpose from that of its operation on the Church during this age. Then, it was simply a power, which took possession of the prophet, over which he had little or no control (see Num. 22:38). Never before Jesus did the Holy Spirit act as "a comforter" and guide into an understanding of truth, and this is the special work of the Spirit now. It is given to the new creature as a seal or evidence of his being begotten to the divine nature and as an earnest of his final deliverance or birth into the spiritual form.

The Spirit had written the mysteries through the prophets, but had not revealed them. These mysteries were written for the church (Jesus and His body), and no one else could know them, nor will anyone else understand them until the church is complete and "the mystery of God . . . finished."

Many of the prophets were good men who loved God and whom God loved, yet Daniel, called the “greatly beloved,” prayed for weeks to God, desiring an understanding of some of the prophecies which he himself had uttered. But the Spirit gave him no understanding of it; finally God sent an angel, gave him all the understanding possible (but evidently not satisfactory), and finished by telling him that the thing was closed up and sealed for a time, but would be understood when due (see Dan. 12:9).

For the same reason that prophets though beloved could not understand, the angels also beloved could not understand. God had not revealed His plan, hence it is written, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man (nor angel, we might add, on the strength of Peter’s statement) the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us (the Church) by His Spirit . . . Now we have received . . . the Spirit of God, that we might know, the things freely given to us of God” (1 Cor. 2:9, 13).

Peter evidently refers to Daniel’s interest above referred to, when he says (chap. 1:10), “Of which salvation (our high calling) the prophets have enquired and searched diligently who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was (speaking) in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the suffering of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister, the things which are now reported unto you, by them which have preached the gospel (good news) unto you, with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven (to be your guide in understanding the preaching), which things the angels desire to look into.” They prophesied of the grace (favor—high-calling) which is come unto you—the gospel church. Now notice another point made strong by Peter’s expression: the prophets testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ. To all who see how the church or “body” of Christ has fellowship with the “Head” both in sufferings and glory, this statement is full of meaning. Our hope is to be accounted worthy to suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together (Rom. 8:17); but the prophets spoke of the sufferings as all future: they spoke of them “beforehand,” so we may be sure that no matter how much the prophets may have suffered as witnesses for God, their sufferings were not like those of the gospel church, reckoned a part of the sufferings of Christ.

Now, again, to His body, the Church, Jesus is called the “Head,” “Leader,” “Captain of our Salvation,” and how proper it is that a leader should precede his followers. How could Abraham and the prophets walk in His footsteps as He hath set us an example? (1 Pet. 2:21.) If Abraham and the prophets be counted as a part of the Christ, then Jesus was their follower; if their sufferings be a part of the afflictions of Christ, then Jesus was merely filling up their afflictions. But not so—the Head suffered first and then the body follows—“considers Him” and His example. This is our privilege to “Fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ” (Col. 1:24).

But we have already shown that one reason why we are called the Christ, is that we are like our Leader, anointed of the spirit or power of God. The Father gave it without measure to Jesus the Head; and Jesus when glorified gave the same to His body, the church at Pentecost, as Peter explains: “He being by the right hand of God exalted, hath shed forth this” (Acts 2:33). The spirit in this sense as a witness of our sonship (on the spiritual plane), as a guide into all truth (as it becomes “meat in due season”), came to the church first at Pentecost, as we read that the Holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:39). Jesus must first make His sacrifice and be accepted of the Father, before any could be received as spiritual, new creatures and recognised by the Spirit’s adoption as such. Jesus’ words bear the same import. He said, “It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you”—“even the spirit of truth” (John 16:7; 15:26). Hence it is evident that the Spirit in this sense of enlightening and anointing is given only to the body of Christ (anointed).

But someone enquires: Is it ever stated that the church is anointed? Yes, we read (1 John 2:27), “The anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you (ye are not dependent upon human wisdom and science), but the same anointing teaches you concerning all things” (Diaglott). Again, let Paul tell us of our anointing (2 Cor. 1:21), “Now He which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who also hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

We conclude, then, that whatever God may have in His plan, as the reward of Abraham, the prophets, and all ancient worthies, it is not the same thing which is promised to the Christ, which began with the head and will end with the last member—in this age. Thus we see that while there was good news to Abraham, and is to be everlasting good news in future ages, yet our Father hath bestowed “the exceeding riches of His grace, in His loving kindness, toward us in Christ Jesus.”

The Bible in Russia.

“During 1928 and 1929 and up to the present time,” writes Dr. John H. Ritson in a brochure on British and Foreign Bible Society’s work in Russia, “the door against Bible importation in any form appears to have been doubly barred, and permission to print the Scriptures within Russia cannot be obtained at present.”

“The policy of opposition,” says Dr. Riston, “is futile, and sooner or later doomed to fail. In 1835 persecution broke out in Madagascar. Missionaries were expelled. There was a death penalty for Bible reading. Christianity was proscribed and public worship was forbidden. But many copies of the Scriptures had been distributed before the persecution began, and they were “the fuel that kept the sacred fire burning (luring a quarter of a century.” When the missionaries returned they found more disciples of Jesus Christ than there were when they left. This has happened again and again in history. Many of the 23 million volumes of the Scriptures circulated by the Bible Society in Russia are there still. The seed is sown and much in good ground. The roots have struck deep down into the hearts of the Russian people. No Government can root them out.”

“He always wins who sides with God
To him no chance is lost;

God’s will is sweetest to him when
It triumphs at his cost.

Ill that He blesses is our good,
And unblest good is ill;

And all is right that seems most wrong,
It it be His sweet will.

—Farrar.