



Volume XXIV No. 8 MELBOURNE, 1st AUGUST, 1941 Price—Twopence Halfpenny

The World As It Is—As It Will Be

WHAT a world this is! Certainly it is very different from what it was. Indeed, if our grandparents, and with some of us even, if our parents were to be brought from the tomb, they would probably at first think they had awakened on a different planet altogether. What wonderful changes have taken place! Our grandparents could look back to the time when there were no railway trains, no telegraphs, nor the numberless inventions for comfort and labour-saving devices which we have, let alone the many new wonders of recent years, in airships, aeroplanes, motors, wireless, X-rays, etc., Little over 100 years ago the quickest way to travel was on horseback; now it is quite usual to go 60 miles an hour by train, and by aeroplane it is now possible to travel at about 400 miles an hour.

It is not necessary to say more; these things are what we see and read of day by day. The point to notice is that for about 5900 years the world went on without all these inventions and conveniences. It would appear that much knowledge possessed by the ancients of 4000 years ago was gradually lost. For instance, there was a wonderful civilisation in Egypt. The Egyptians were wonderful artificers in carvings, in colours, and experts in scientific matters. They had some secret mode of making flexible glass and staining glass, and the great Pyramid of Gizeh is still one of the wonders of the world with its wonderful stones, so large that even today we have no machinery capable of lifting them; yet they are so evenly surfaced and placed so accurately that it is not possible to even thrust a knife between. Not only so, but its passage system is a wonderful illustration of the various Divine dispensations toward mankind in the different ages of the world's history; and the scientific matters revealed in its construction all speak of much knowledge, that has been lost and which men have only in recent years been regaining. This, by the way, is one of the many evidences available that the present-day scientists who teach evolution are quite wrong. There is not any evidence whatever indicating that there has been the slightest advancement in human nature, either mentally or physically, for the past 6000 years. This has been admitted by Professor E. G. Conklin, of Harvard University of U.S.A., who has said: "Undoubtedly there have been minor changes in the human body; probably an increasing resistance to certain diseases due to the elimination of those persons who were more susceptible, as well as certain degenerative changes in sense organs, hair, teeth, and toes, but in bodily evolution man has made no marked progress for at least 20,000 years."

Just the contrary to evolution has been taking place ever since sin entered and death began to swallow up the human race. Man has been degenerating ever since that time. When mankind represented by our first parents disobeyed God, the Almighty left the human family to go its own way and take the consequences of their action. Instead, then, of God's law of love developing in their hearts and minds, the spirit of the adversary entered. Selfishness has developed all the bitter envyings, malice, hatred, strife, resulting in slavery and oppression; greed and ambition and jealousy have brought about wars and carnage, and morally the race has become weak and corrupt. Many had thought that the Churches were going to conquer the world for Christ, and that men would by becoming converted get rid of, the devilish spirit of selfishness, greed and lust, and receive instead the spirit of Christ, of brotherhood, and love, and that thus the angels' message of peace and goodwill would be fulfilled.

What is the Position To-day?

From a moral condition we have to confess that the Apostle's words, 2 Tim. 3:1-5, are undoubtedly being fulfilled: "In the last days perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemous, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of

God, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof.” We note that these remarks are in respect of professing Christians, those having a “form of godliness,” and if such be the case with those connected with churches, what of those who do not have any form of godliness? It is very clear that if the conversion of the world depended upon the church the world would never be converted. Religion to-day is indeed at a low ebb, but it is just what was predicted. Our Lord’s own words were:

”When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith in the earth?” The Revelation of St. John also predicts that the church system at the seventh or last period of the church’s history would have lost its power, its zeal; it would be rich in worldly goods, and sit as a queen, and lack nothing in its own eyes, but in the eyes of “the faithful and true witness,” they are “wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,” and he declares: “Because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot I will spue thee out of my mouth.”—Rev. 3:14-22.

The Industrial Viewpoint.

Many now living can look back at the oppressive conditions under which men, women and children slaved. Men were expected to do farm work and rear families on about 15/- a week. Men worked from about 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. day by day for £ 1 a week. Dock labourers would receive 3/6 or 4/- per day, and might sometimes get a full week, but often only a day or two. They, with their families, lived in the evil-smelling stone-floored homes of the slums, in living uncomfortableness, with no chance to hope for better days. Women and children even, of 9 or 10 years of age, had to work in any possible way under terrible conditions and all hours. Well did St. Paul describe the human race under the curse of sin and death as “the poor groaning creation.” What a mercy it is that such conditions have been greatly alleviated in our day. Yet how unsatisfactory are matters at present. Although everyone is so much better off, although the working man today may enjoy comforts and luxuries, unthought of by Zings and the wealthy of days gone by, yet there was never so much dissatisfaction, so much unrest, and “men’s hearts are to-day failing for what is coming on the earth.”

The world to-day is facing a great climax. The working class has gained much power, and by united efforts they have lifted themselves out of the abject slavery of a few years ago, and while there are some splendid men in their ranks who would guide along the lines of moderation and wisdom, these often fail to control the rank and file.

There is an undercurrent of anarchy. Communism has honeycombed the masses, and the spirit of recklessness and vengeance is often displayed. In fact, there is every evidence that the world’s crisis is fast approaching, as foretold by Daniel 12:1.

The Time of the End.

As before intimated, all this change in the world is of recent date. Until the sixteenth century, and the time of the great Reformation, the world had grovelled along going from bad to worse in ignorance, superstition, oppression and degradation. With the invention of the printing press and the awakening by the Reformation, the way was being prepared for the great developments of the present. The Wesley movement, too, was a great factor in the enlightening process, leading men to feel after something better in the way of conditions. Then came the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, the Pope of Rome was defied and taken to France as a prisoner, where he died. The great power of the Papacy, the foe of all progress towards light, liberty and truth, was broken. The people began to taste liberty, and have ever since been gradually attaining it.

From 1800 A.D. the knowledge of God’s Book began to go out into the world. Bible Societies were formed, and where the Bible goes, knowledge increases and liberty comes. It was during the nineteenth century that the great and successful missionary enterprises were undertaken, and the Bible sent into every land and nation in the world. It is then since 1800 that all these wonderful inventions have come about, and that men have “run to and fro” as never before, and knowledge in every department of science, mechanics, agriculture, medicine, surgery, etc., has been, and still is, increasing, so that it would be unreasonable to deny the fact, that we are living in the “time of the end” mentioned in Daniel 12:1-4.

What is the World Coming To?

Many have had very crude ideas respecting the “end of the world,” and have taught that the literal earth is to be burned up, and that, all in a single twenty-four hour day. Such conclusion is quite contrary to the Scripture, for how could the Lord’s Prayer have any fulfilment—”Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as in heaven”?

How could the promise to Israel ever be fulfilled which says that they shall be gathered again to their own land, and never again to be plucked up out of their land? (Amos 9:14-15.) But there are so many promises that would fail, too

numerous to refer to; just, for instance, that to Abraham: “In blessing I will bless thee, and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 17:1-12); and to Noah, after the flood, the Lord said: “I will not again curse the earth any more for man’s sake . . . neither will I again smite every living thing as I have done” (Genesis 8:21, 22). On the other hand, the Scripture definitely declares “The earth abideth for ever.”

There are figurative Scriptures which have been misunderstood, and led to erroneous thought that the literal earth is to be destroyed by fire. When, however, we make a careful examination of the usage of the words earth, world, and heavens, and “rightly divide the word of truth,” we find that all is harmonious. If we follow the Apostle’s reasoning in 2 Peter 3, we shall see that it is the same kind of heavens and earth which is to be destroyed by fire, as the “heavens and earth” which at the time of Noah were destroyed by the great Flood. The literal earth was not destroyed in Noah’s day, nor were the literal heavens, but “earth” represents the social or national arrangements and the “heavens” represents the religious elements or spiritual powers. These did pass away at the deluge, and a new earth or arrangement of society commenced, and the angels who had proved unfaithful in the days prior to the flood were no longer permitted to materialise and walk about as men, and marry the daughters of men. (Genesis 6 and Jude 6.) A new spiritual arrangement, a new heavens began. The present heavens and earth, the social, industrial national arrangements and spiritual and religious powers, the present evil world of which Satan has been the prince, will pass away with a great noise. Then the Apostle assures us, “we look for a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.” It is the changing time we are living in, the time when the present social, industrial, financial structure will break up and be destroyed in a fiery time of trouble such as never has been, and when also the heavens shall pass away. The prophet Zephaniah (3:8-9) tells how universal this very time of trouble will be: “The whole earth shall be devoured by the fire of God’s jealousy, For then will I turn to the people a pure language that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve Him with one consent.”

Thus it is quite clear that the earth itself is not to be destroyed. It is the unjust, unrighteous, cruel selfish institutions of the earth that are to be burnt up, and then the poor “groaning creation” which, during this long night of sin, sorrow and oppression, has’ been “travailing in pain together until now” will realise that the “Desire of all nations” has come to deliver the world from all oppression, and bring in the happy day when the “wicked shall no longer prosper, but the righteous shall flourish as the palm.”

The pure language of which the prophet Zephaniah (3:8, 9) speaks is the message of the true Gospel, which will declare that Satan’s dominion is overthrown, and that Christ has taken His great power and will bring in light and liberty, peace and goodwill among men, together with a clear understanding of God’s purpose. “For God will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth; for there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time.” (1 Tim. 2:3-6.) That will be the due time for all to come to know the Lord, as it is promised, “For all shall know Me from the least unto the greatest,” “For the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the great deep.”

The question may arise as to why there has been such a long delay. Time and space will not permit us to fully explain all that we would wish, but we invite all who earnestly desire to understand the Bible and the purpose of God, more clearly, to write to us for further literature or to explain any difficulty on these questions. We may just add, in conclusion, that the Scripture makes the matter plain, and that it was just and kind of God to condemn the whole race in Adam, so that all might also be justly redeemed by the one man, Christ, the second Adam—Rom. 5:1-12; 1 Cor. 15:21-28.

By this means man has first had an experience of the evil results of sin, and then he is to have an opportunity of turning from sin to serve the living God and inheriting life eternal. Had all been placed on trial, like father Adam, without experience, we would likely have done as he did, and thus have forfeited our lives, and as justice demands life for life, each sinner under such circumstances would have needed a separate redeemer. So, during the past 6000 years, man has been learning a sad lesson, while also the race has been increasing, each one getting not more than a short life-time of experience.

In the meantime, the Divine scheme of salvation has been developing; certain features have progressed in the different dispensations, particularly from the Patriarchal Age, when the Gospel was preached to Abraham. In this way gradually God revealed His purpose of ultimately “blessing all the families of the earth,” and also made selection of certain worthy characters such as mentioned in Hebrews 11, who shall be raised from the dead and be “princes in all the earth.” (Psalm 45:16.)

In the Law dispensation, besides further revealing of His plan, He taught the principles of His throne, and selected the nation of Israel, the faithful of which people will be, when resurrected, the representatives of Christ’s Kingdom on the earth.

Then came the Gospel Age, the Spiritual Age, in which our Lord called the kingdom of heaven class, and the Apostle James explained that the purpose of this Age is “to take out a people for God’s name.” (Acts 15:14-17.) Our Lord said it would be but “a little flock to whom it is the Father’s good pleasure to give the Kingdom”; and all the Apostles explain that this class has quite a different hope from that of the rest of mankind. It is a heavenly hope, to be spiritual beings, to be with the Lord, to be like Him, and to see Him as He is, (1 John 3:1, 2.) This class is the “Abrahamic seed,” the “stars of heaven” class of that seed, which is to be joint heirs with Christ in His Kingdom to bless all the families of the earth. (Galatians 3:9, 16, 27, 29.)

Undoubtedly, we are living in the closing years of the Gospel Age; soon the full number of God’s elect will be complete. Then the great time of trouble (Daniel 12:1-4) will sweep over the earth, and level down society, and prepare men’s hearts to seek the Lord. “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee. For the kingdom is the Lord’s and He is the governor among the nations.” (Psalm 22:26, 27.)

To-day not only do we see the clouds of trouble gathering for the storm, but we see also the preparation for the coming Kingdom in the re-gathering of Israel to their ancient land. Soon the King (Christ) will take His great power to reign. The Church will be gathered home to reign with Him. The great multitude to serve before the throne will then take their place. Next will be the restoration of the ancient worthies and restored Israel to represent the Kingdom on earth, then will the whole human family return from the tomb and be brought to the knowledge of saving grace (Isa. 35:10.) Thus all the willing and obedient will have the opportunity of going up the highway of holiness, and receive the reward of eternal life. (Acts 15:14-17; Rom. 11:25-27; 1 Tim. 2:3-6.)

Then will the prayer be answered, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as in heaven.” How different everything will be when there is no enemy of light and truth and righteousness to tempt men astray and to stir up war and strife, envy, ambition and greed, but when the spirit of Jesus of Nazareth prevails throughout the earth, when all the selfish walls of class and nation are broken down, when all men of every tribe form one great brotherhood, and when the sun of righteousness has arisen with healing in his wings healing all earth’s diseases, so that there shall be no more pain and no more death. The earth shall yield its increase, and every man may safely dwell under his own vine and fig tree. Gradually every form of evil will be stamped out, and there shall be nothing left to mar the happiness of a perfected race rejoicing in the bounteous and beautiful provisions of a glorious Creator. Such will be the condition in the next age, or what is scripturally termed the new heavens and earth which the Apostle John prophetically saw in vision—“I saw a new heavens and a new earth, for the first heavens and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea (symbol of unrest, discontent, trouble). And I, John, saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem (the new government) coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a Bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, ‘Behold the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.’ And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain: For the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’”—Rev. 21:1-5.

Kingdoms of this World.

THE question as to whether the Millennial Kingdom of Christ could rightly be termed the fifth Universal Empire in succession to the four empires of earth has been raised as the result of an interpretation of Rev. 17:9-11, which passage it is claimed reveals that there are to be eight world empires and that Christ's Kingdom will really be the ninth.

The difficulty with the above claim seems to be in confusing the seven various forms of government of Rome with the four great Universal Empires which have in turn exercised control during Gentile Times. Revelation 17 is surely not dealing with the 2520 years of Gentile Times but rather with the judgments to come on Papacy whose connection is restricted to Rome, the fourth Universal Empire. See Rev. 17:1—"Come hither; I will show thee the judgment of the great whore," etc. ,

To imply that the first three of the seven heads of the beast, "on which the woman (Papacy) sat"—by which she was supported—referred to the empires of Babylon, MedoPersia, and Greece, is surely an error. It was in St. Paul's day that he warned against this "mystery of iniquity" commencing to work, while the fourth Universal Empire Rome—had already been some time in power.

In reviewing the world empires and the inauguration of Christ's Kingdom, as revealed by the prophet Daniel (chapters 2 and 7), the chapter "The Kingdoms of This World," in the book "The Divine Plan of the Ages" is recommended as a most helpful aid to a clear understanding of this matter. The several "heads" upon the beast which upheld the "woman" as explained in Rev. 17, is a subject additional to that of the world empires; indeed, is an explanation of what would occur during the period of the fourth world empire.

We quote from the volume "Revelation of Jesus Christ" as follows:—"The revealing angel proceeds to explain what is represented by the seven heads, in the words, 'Here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains (hills) on which the woman sitteth.' The angel . . . explained these words as referring to the seven-hilled city of Rome. He further states; 'And the kings are seven; the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come, and when he may come he must remain a little while.' This is quite generally understood to represent the seven successive forms of government that have ruled from the city of Rome. The angel's explanation most naturally suggests the question, Does the expression, 'five are fallen,' mean that such was a fact at the time St. John saw the vision? or, does it refer to a future time from St. John's day, namely a time when the woman was drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of martyrs of Jesus, and when the judgment upon the woman was about to begin to be experienced—the judgment referred to in the angelic utterance to St. John: 'Come, and I will show thee the judgment upon the great harlot'? It would seem that the latter view is the correct one for the following reason:—

"The fourth beast or Roman Empire (a latter phase or aspect of which the scarlet colored beast of the vision under consideration describes) did not come into prophecy until the first three beasts, the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Grecian, had passed away. (See Dan. 2:40; 7:23.). The third or Grecian beast had four heads, which represent that this empire was divided into four parts. The last one of these, was Egypt, and did not come under the fourth beast Of Roman dominion until about 31 B.C. The seven heads on the fourth beast represent seven forms of government that would rule successively from the city of Rome, but history finds only one as having ceased or passed away in St. John's day. This was the republican form which ended in 27 B.C. The form ruling in St. John's day was the second or military imperial.

"It is our understanding, then, that St. John was translated in spirit from the Isle of Patmos, and from the year 96 A.D., down the stream of time to 1799 when the harlot woman is represented as being "drunken with the blood of the saints"—the time when Papacy's judgments had begun, by the humiliation and dethronement of the Pope by Napoleon. At this time five of the heads had fallen, and the sixth head, the Roman republic was ruling . . .

"If our understanding of the angel's explanation of these seven heads is correct, then the Victor Immanuel Dynasty, ruling since 1870, is the seventh head, and the next or eight form of the beast will be the beast without a head, which would be anarchy . . .

"This last government (seventh head, Victor Immanuel Dynasty) has now continued as head of Rome since September, 1870; and to-day more than 220,000,000 Catholics are biding their time, waiting and longing for the auspicious moment when a blow can be struck for its overthrow; vainly hoping for a restoration to Rome of Papal sovereignty; while the prophetic symbol demands, not the restoration of Papacy, or any other government, but the rising of the beast itself without a head; in other words the peoples and nations or body of the beast without art organised government, as the next verse will show; 'And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.'—Verse 11.

“This eighth is not a head, since the beast had but seven. This eighth is the beast as it is to be after its seventh or last head has fallen. This last or eighth state will be anarchy. The expression, ‘and is of the seven,’ signifies that the nations (‘waters’ ver. 15) on which the woman sat, have been of the seven; and are already taking on a separate existence as the inter-nations, or people of all nations . . . ‘And they that dwell upon the earth shall wonder (whose names are not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world), when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is (this last its final, eighth form).’—Rev. 17:8.”

Christian Baptism.

It is always a joy to the Lord’s people to learn of others consecrating themselves to God and entering “the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,” and in recording the following address given at a recent Baptism Service in Adelaide, when two Sisters symbolised their immersion into Christ’s death, it is felt that all our brethren will rejoice with the members in Adelaide, and also receive encouragement in their own consecration by the thoughts as follows.

IN presenting oneself for baptism, it is very necessary that each should realise the true meaning of this rite, which, in the Scriptures, is enjoined on every true believer. Baptism into Christ is not baptism unto repentance, nor for the remission of sins, which applied to Jews only.

The Jews were already a covenanted people, consecrated to God as a nation, and if faithful to God—faithful to their covenant—when Jesus came and presented Himself to them as their Messiah, on their acceptance of Him as such in place of Moses, they were transferred from Moses to Christ. John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ, and his work was to prepare the way for this transfer of the Israelites from the leadership of Moses to that of Christ.

There were many, however, who had not lived in harmony with their covenant, and it was to these John preached, calling them to repent of their violations of it, and those who did this were immersed in water to symbolise their repentance, the washing away of their sins, thus preparing them for their transference into Christ, their Messiah.

But baptism could not mean repentance in this sense to the Gentiles, who had never been under the Jewish covenant; hence, after the elect remnant of Israel had been received and the Gospel message went to the Gentiles, to select out of them the number necessary to complete the Body of Christ, we hear no further exhortation in the Epistles to the Gentile churches to be baptised as a sign of repentance, nor as a symbol of the washing away of sins.

And since we, by nature, are not Jews, but are of the ‘Gentiles whose fathers were previously aliens and foreigners, so far as God’s covenants and promises were concerned, therefore, we should not apply to ourselves that idea of baptism which was Jewish, but that idea which the Apostle unfolds in Rom. 6:3-5 and Col. 2:12.

The full significance of baptism, of which the immersion in water commanded by our Lord is the symbol, is clearly shown by the Apostle in the passages just mentioned.

“Know ye not,” the Apostle says, “that as many of us as were immersed into Jesus Christ, were immersed into His death.” Those who know this fully and thoroughly, and they alone, truly appreciate the water immersion our Lord enjoined, and the importance of its significance.

“Immersed into Jesus Christ.” Those who see the high calling of this Gospel Age, to joint-heirship with Christ Jesus our Lord, as members in particular of the “Body of Christ,” of which the Redeemer is Head and Lord, know that our attainment of that high honour, depends upon our acceptableness as members in that Body of Christ. (Rom. 12:1; 8:17, 18.)

No one is “called” or invited into this “Body of Christ” the “Church of the firstborn,” except those who already are believers, such only as own Christ as their Redeemer or Justifier, and who are, therefore, justified freely from all things, by faith in His blood. Such, and not sinners, are invited to become joint-sacrificers and joint-heirs with Christ.

In the type, the blemished of the flock were not acceptable on the Lord’s altar under the law, which shows God’s rejection during this Age of all imperfect offerings. Our Lord was the actually spotless, unblemished, perfect lamb of God, sacrificed for our sins; and in inviting some to join Him in sacrifice, and afterward in glory and honour, the Father accepts only such as are first justified, and thus made “whiter than snow” who, because of faith in, and acceptance of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, are reckoned perfect, and hence are acceptable to God as joint-sacrificers with

Christ.

Those who were immersed into Christ Jesus, were immersed into His death. This is given by the Apostle as the significance of water immersion. The real baptism, therefore, is this immersion into a sacrificial death with Christ; and the water immersion, though a beautiful figure which graphically illustrates the real one, is only its symbol.

But how much is meant by the expression, “Immersed into His death?” In what way was our Lord’s death different from that of other men? His death was different from that of other men in that theirs is a penalty for sin, while His was a sacrifice for the sins of others, to release others from their penalty—death.

We, with all others of Adam’s family, involuntarily share Adam’s death—the wages of sin. And we, with all the rest of the human family, were redeemed by Christ’s death, and in advance of the world granted a right to live again: receiving the restoration of all the human rights and privileges which Adam lost.

We who believe this good news, accept, and begin by faith to enjoy those redeemed rights and privileges even now, believing that what Christ died to secure, and has promised to give, is as sure as though already possessed. We have joy and peace in believing this “good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people,” and, by faith, already reckon ourselves as in possession of those good things which are to be brought unto all who hate sin and love righteousness, at the second coming of our Lord Jesus.

It is when we are thus justified, repossessed of the human rights lost through Adam, that we receive the call or invitation to become something far higher and grander than perfect men fully restored to the likeness of God in the flesh (though that is so grand, but few appreciate it)—to become joined with our Redeemer in the glories and dignities of the Divine nature (2 Pet.. 1:4.), and co-workers with Him in the great work of the Millennial Age—the work of restoring the redeemed race of mankind to perfection and all that was lost through Adam in the fall.

But this invitation is accompanied by certain conditions which are clearly and definitely stated. Those who would share with Christ in the coming glories and dignities, must share in His death—they must be immersed or buried into His death. To be sharers in His death means that, as our Redeemer spent His life, not in self-gratification (even lawful), but used it up ‘in the interest of truth and righteousness, in opposing sin and in doing the work and carrying out the plan of the Father, so we must use our time and talents, our energies and rights and privileges in the same way.

These have been redeemed and given to us by Christ and we not only consecrate these all to the Father’s service, but we must use them faithfully even unto death, as He has set us an example—walking in His footsteps as nearly as possible. If we thus be dead with Him, we shall in due time, also live with Him; if we thus suffer with Him, and in the present life, endure whatever afflictions come to us in the course of doing the Father’s will, even unto death, we are counted as sharers in His death; and all those who share “His death,” will also share “His resurrection.” (Phil. 3:8-11.)

As Christ’s death differs from the Adamic death, so “His resurrection” differs from the resurrection of mankind in general. His resurrection is pointed out in the Scriptures as being, “The resurrection,” and also the “first or chief resurrection.” His resurrection was to the Divine immortal nature, a spiritual body; and so many of us as shall be immersed into His death, shall also obtain a share in “His resurrection,” to the Divine, immortal nature. As the Apostle says, that we who have borne the image of the earthly father, Adam, who lost it for us, have been redeemed to it again by Christ’s sacrifice, and have surrendered it with Him, as joint-sacrificers of the human nature. Thus we became partakers of a new nature, and shall bear the image of that new Divine nature in “the resurrection.” Note how pointedly the Apostle speaks of this in Rom. 6:4, 5, “Therefore, we are buried with Him by baptism into death, in order that, like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in a new life (our new natures are reckoned as begun now, and are to be perfected at our resurrection in the Lord’s likeness). For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, (then) we shall be (united) with Him in His resurrection.” (Rom. 6:5.)

It is evident then, that baptism in water is the symbol of a complete and, to those who would be joint-heirs with Christ, an indispensable self-sacrifice—an immersion with our Lord into His death—an immersion which began, and is counted from the moment the justified believer consecrated himself and surrendered his will to God, though to secure the prize it must be continued until the close of the earthly life.

It was from this standpoint that our Lord spoke when He said, “I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.” (Luke 12:50.) He had already performed the symbol at Jordan, but He was now referring to the consummation of His baptism into death. His will, surrendered to the Father’s will and plan, was already buried, but as the dark hour of Gethsemane and Calvary drew near he longed to finish His sacrifice.

It was from this same standpoint that He spoke of baptism to the two disciples who asked to sit, one on His right hand

and the other on His left in the Kingdom. “He answered and said unto them, ye know not what ye ask, are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?” (Matt. 20:22). Our Lord referred here to the baptism into death, and shows that none need expect to share the Kingdom, except those who share this baptism of death with Him.

But while self-denial and suffering are essential accompaniments of our consecration—our baptism into death with Christ—yet the end, the prospect held out to us if we are faithful in carrying out our undertaking, is so wonderful, so glorious, that if we can realise it, even faintly, it will so far outweigh any earthly disadvantages and sufferings, that these will seem as nothing in comparison.

This was the case with our Lord Himself when He was on earth fulfilling His baptism into death. Of Him, we are told, for the joy—the joyful prospect—set before Him, He endured the Cross, and despised the shame, of it.

The Apostle also, referring to this, declares that the sufferings of this present time of sacrifice, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. And again, in speaking of some of the sufferings he had endured as a result of his obedience to the Lord’s will, he calls them, “Light afflictions,” which, in comparison with the final outcome, were “but for a moment” and were working out for Him, a “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” And this will be our experience too, if we will but continue looking “not at the things that are seen but at the things that are not seen (by the eye of faith) for the things that are seen are temporal but the things that are not seen (the glories of the new spiritual nature) are eternal.” “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things that God hath in reservation for them that love Him supremely,” and who manifest their love by their faithfulness and earnestness in carrying out their consecration.

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The Lord My Shepherd.

(Psalm 23)

IN the precious and true sentiments of this Psalm, David doubtless took great consolation in the midst of his temptations and trials, and of the realisation of his own infirmities and short-comings. As he looked back to his early shepherd life and remembered his own care for the dependent sheep of his flock, the thought of the Lord's similar care over His people came to mind. And, doubtless, with this realisation of the Lord's goodness and care, came also a renewed determination on David's part to be henceforth a true sheep, that he might always remain under the Shepherd's care.

While such was the significance of these words of David, to us, the church under the care of the Anointed Jesus, our Good Shepherd, they mean more; for, as the Lord's inspired prophet, David puts these words into the mouth of all of the Lord's "little flock" of consecrated followers who obediently hearken to His voice and who in meek humility take comfort both in His chastening rod and in His blessed staff of promise and hope.

To those who are not in this attitude these words do not apply. The Lord is not a Shepherd of wayward goats (however, He may permit the common blessings of sun and rain to come to all): the proud and the self-willed have no part in His tender care; and those who are truly His sheep and who can, therefore, claim His care and leading, are, as He tells us (Luke 12:32), only a "little flock," to whom "it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom." And it is to the kingdom—the Millennial kingdom of God, to be established over all the earth—that the Good Shepherd is thus leading His consecrated flock. Such may truly say

Verse 1. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." They shall have all needful instruction, all needful grace and comfort and discipline and training and care, and such measure of temporal good as will be most conducive to their highest spiritual and everlasting blessing. In fact, all things shall work together for good to the sheep of the Lord's pasture—to the called according to His purpose—Rom. 8:28.

Verse 2 assures us that our hunger and thirst after truth and righteousness shall be satisfied—that we shall be bountifully fed and sweetly refreshed with the meat in due season and the water of life.

Verse 3. "He restoreth my soul," etc., refers to our present justification through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ; for we are, therefore, now reckoned as having passed from death unto life, although the times of restitution have not yet begun. And being thus reckoned righteous, we are led by the Good Shepherd in the paths of righteousness and peace "for His name's sake"—because we are His, and because we trust in His name, in His merit, the merit of His sacrifice freely given for our sins.

Verse 4. "Yea, (although I am not actually so restored, yet by faith in the promise, through Christ, I do so reckon myself, even) though (like all the rest of the dying world) I (still) walk through the valley of the shadow of death. (I was born in this valley and shall die in it, yet) I will fear no evil (no failure of Thy sure covenant); for Thou art with me, (even here, and) Thy (chastening) rod and Thy (faithful) staff (of promise and hope), they comfort me."

Verse 5, refers to the bountiful supply of soul-satisfying truth—the meat in due season, and the full cup of joy and gladness—prepared and spread before the household of faith even here in the midst of this valley of the shadow of death and in the presence of our enemies—Satan and his messengers, who vainly seek to stumble the "feet" of Christ and to subvert our faith. It refers also to our anointing with the holy spirit as members of the body of Christ.

Verse 6. In view of such present bounty and blessing, well may we rest in the assurance that goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life—both of this present life and also of that which is to come; and that if, as obedient sheep, we continue to follow the leading of the Good Shepherd we shall eventually dwell in the house of the Lord forever, as members of the royal, divine family, as the Bride and joint-heir of Jehovah's dear Son.

The End of the Way.

WORD is to hand from Adelaide of the passing of our elderly Sister Horner at the age of 85 years. Our late dear sister had lived an active life and was zealous in serving the cause of the truth, both in speaking to others of the coming Kingdom, and also in distributing the message by means of the printed page. It was good to see our Sister's faith and zeal in the Lord's service. For many years she had been looking for the coming of the better day—"the day of His appearing." For a little more than a year our Sister's physical strength had been steadily failing, though the end came after a comparatively short illness.

Much sympathy is extended to the members of our late Sister's family, and especially to her daughter, Sister Ridgway, who had so tenderly watched over her mother during the time of her failing strength. So while our sympathies go out to the dear bereaved ones, yet we cannot but rejoice in the thought of our Sister's faithfulness, and that now, having reached the end of the way, her sufferings are all over, and she has gone to her reward. "Sown in weakness, raised in power." "The Lord knoweth them that are His."

Our earnest prayers are offered at the throne of heavenly grace that our Sister Ridgway may find the grace and strength from the Lord in her sad loss, and be enabled to press on faithfully in the narrow way that leads to life.

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Build on the Rock

If thou but suffer God to guide thee,
And hope in Him through all thy ways,

He'll give thee strength whate'er betide thee,
And bear thee through the evil days ;

Who trust in God's unchanging love,
Build on the Rock that nought can move.

What can these anxious cares avail thee,
These never-ceasing moans and sighs?

What can it help, if thou bewail thee,
O'er each dark moment as it flies?

Our cross and trials do but press
The heavier for our bitterness,

Only be still, and wait His leisure,
In cheerful hope, with heart content

To take whate'er thy Father's pleasure
And all discerning love hath sent ;

Nor doubt our inmost wants are known
To Him who asks us for His own.

All are alike before the Highest ;
'Tis easy to our God we know,

To raise thee up, though low thou liest,
To make the rich man poor and low ;

True wonders still by Him are wrought,
Who setteth up and brings to nought.

Sing, pray, and keep His ways unswerving,
So do thine own part faithfully,

And trust His word; though undeserving,
Thou yet shalt find it true for thee ;

God never yet forsook in need
The man that trusted Him indeed.

—Guiding Star.

Thoughts on Public Prayer.

IN Luke 11:1 we read that the disciples said, "Lord teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples," and the Lord gave them the prayer which we call the Lord's Prayer. In Matt. 6:9 the words "after this manner pray ye," are put before the prayer, and in Matt. 6:7 the Lord said, "When ye pray use not vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."

The above texts would seem to have reference to public prayer, which is worship and supplication. Our worship at all times must be reverential, yet how often there seems to be a lack of reverence when a speaker addresses God continually. When speaking to a person we do not keep using his name. Others quite forget the Lord's instructions "use not vain repetitions." The petition may be repeated in various ways, or there may even be continual repetition of one word; surely these are all contrary to the instructions of Jesus Christ.

In 1 Kings 18:26 the priests of Baal called to their gods from morning until noon—the vain repetition of the heathen. Then Elijah in a few words prayed to God and was heard. The Christian when praying in public should remember that

God looketh on the heart and does not consider multiplicity of words. This point should be particularly noted in every closing prayer.

In the opening prayer there will have been various petitions which need not all be repeated at the close of the service. Our devotional exercises, either address or study having terminated, we desire to keep them in our minds, so the closing prayer should be only a short request that all may be blessed and spiritually refreshed by what the Lord has provided. So taking the Lord's Prayer as a perfect example—"In this manner pray ye."

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