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The Present Truth.

“Holdfast that which thou hast.” (Rev. 3 :11).

THE closing of the year is always a good time for considering progress and prospects, and to review conditions.

We are not concerned with things social, political or national, excepting as we can recognise in these connections the fulfilment of Prophecy. It requires no great power of discernment to those acquainted with the Scriptures to note how perfectly the present-day conditions fulfil what has been foretold by the Lord, His Apostles and the Prophets nearly and over 2000 years ago. We may say in the words of the historian Rollins, who viewed the fulfilment of Daniel’s prophecy in the events he was recording : “Can any reasonable man who makes use of his understanding ascribe such a prediction either to mere chance or to the conjectures of human prudence and sagacity? Can any light but that which proceeds from God Himself penetrate, in this manner, into the darkness of futurity and point out the events of it in so exact and circumstantial a manner?” In this connection we need only mention one or two passages as instances :—Daniel 12 :4; 2 Pet. 3 :2-4 ; 2 Tim. 3 :1-7; Luke 17 :26-30, etc. The state of the world to-day becomes more and more “as it was in the days of Lot” in Sodom, and “as it was in the days of Noah” before the flood, and there can be no doubt that a greater calamity on the human race is impending.

Our particular thought, however, is in connection with the present truth and the privileges, prospects and dangers which exist at this time.

There is quite prevalent a notion that it matters little what one believes, and that there should be no divisions on account of differences in faith. There are even those who have understood present truth, who underestimate the value of “the things we have received and know of whom we have received them,” and seem ready to compromise for the sake of preserving unity.

In the past our fathers so valued their convictions of truth that they preferred death rather than betray their faith. The question arises, who is right, who is the more pleasing in the sight of God—those who love unity by compromising truth, or those who in Christian spirit most stand firm for truth at the expense of unity?

We readily concede that quite often differences are magnified and extremes are taken and bitter separations have taken place which were quite unnecessary, and indeed even when divisions are unavoidable, bitterness can never be excused. However we may differ, even on the most fundamental

principles of Christian faith, Christian love should so prevail that there could be no unkindness, but simply a committing the whole matter to the Lord with the prayer that He may open the blind eyes and, if He will, lead us again into the unity of the faith and happy bonds of fellowship.

We need, however, to remember that the Christian religion is not a flexible, compromising one. Systems established and governed by men may make changes to meet circumstances, both in their principles and methods, but the principles of Christ established at Pentecost are fixed, and no authority on earth can change them. Many authorities have, however, sought to accommodate Christianity to times and circumstances, and have brought in many anti-Christian teachings so that the creeds and dogmas of the churches to-day very greatly misrepresent God and His great plan of salvation. The downfall of the church was not through faithful men and women maintaining an attitude of loyalty to truth and righteousness, though history records many such noble characters. The downfall of the church came about because there were not sufficient unflinching defenders of the faith once delivered to the saints, and because the majority sought conformity with the world and undervalued the truth.

Particularly in this day is the spirit of compromise abounding. It is the Laodicean spirit that is neither hot nor cold, and says, do not trouble about doctrine, only let us join together in one great confederacy.

There is a spirit which is quite prevalent, to let clown the standards of truth and ethics. It has indeed wrought havoc in the churches, so that they have become altogether worldly and indifferent to the true spirit of the truth and consecration, as taught by the Lord and His Apostles. The adversary would seek in the same way to “quench the spirit” among those who have become awake to the “present truth” (those things which have been revealed by the opening up of the Scriptures as “meat in due season” or truths specially applicable to our day). It is no doubt these matters pertaining to our Lord’s Second Presence, the harvest work, the closing down of the present age, etc., that we are exhorted to “Hold fast that no man take thy crown.”

The questions arise as to what does a true Christian really need to believe? What are the essentials of our faith?

What is it that we must “Hold fast?” Does it mean only that we preserve a clear knowledge of truth, or does it not imply “walking in the light?”

What, then, constitutes a Christian? The Bible shows how in due time “God will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth,” and how under the New Covenant and its great Mediator all the willing and obedient will be assisted to work out their justification to life by work of obedience and righteousness. The New Testament just as clearly shows that the Divine purpose for this Gospel Age, or “The Kingdom of Heaven” Age, as the Lord designated it, is to select a spiritual class to be joint heirs with Christ, to reign with him in the coming Kingdom Age, when the wider opportunity will come to all mankind. That will be when the Church or Bride of Christ will be complete, and “the Spirit and the Bride will say, come, and whosoever will let him come and take of the water of life freely.”

This class of “Priests and Kings”—the Church—is dealt with quite differently, in its selection, from the way the rest of mankind will be in the next age. That will be an age of works, justification by works. This is an age of faith, justification by faith, and that faith is the gift of God. (Eph. 2:8). Our Lord declared, “No man cometh unto Me except it be given him of My Father”; “No man cometh unto the Son except the Father draw him”

The first essential then is that we be invited. How are we invited or drawn? It is through the Word, as the Lord intimated in His prayer, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe through their word.” (John 17:20). So it is God who invites those who may be joint heirs with His Son, by

bringing His Word to their attention, and by His holy spirit He grants the faculty of faith. There is the conviction of sin, and the longing to be at peace with God and to be righteous. Then in true penitence, faith in Calvary's atoning sacrifice lifts the load of sin and we find peace and rest. What a great favour—this is, first to be called of God. and then instead of being slowly justified by. works under the New Covenant of the next age to be at once “Justified by faith and at peace with God.” This particular arrangement of grace is in order that we may be able, through the merit of our Redeemer “to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.” This is the second step of Romans 5:1-2, after being. justified by faith through our Lord Jesus Christ, “By whom also we have access into this grace wherein we stand, and now rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”

Following this step of consecration, we receive the begetting of the holy spirit—the spirit of adoption—and God calls us His sons. This holy spirit begets in each one a new mind, a new heart, a new creature, so that though the human being is laid upon the altar of sacrifice to be done to death, for “as many as have been baptised into Christ have been baptised into His death” (Rom. 6:3) ; yet a new life is begun, a spiritual life, and as new creatures we have become Christians in the full sense.

As Christians then we have so far these essentials —The favour of having been called of God. The gift of faith. Justification through the exercise of that faith. The holy spirit of sonship through the further step of faith— consecration. The wonderful hope of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Having reached to these things are there no other essentials for the Christian? We would answer that the new creature needs nourishing. If we fail to feed upon the Lord's word, if we fail to drink of that water of life which is provided for us, we shall fail to develop and probably soon lose our faith and our hope. We must go on from these first principles and learn-to appreciate the deep things of the Word. We remember how St. Paul felt that it was useless to try and explain the deeper things to the Hebrews because they had not exercised their minds along the lines of truth.

They had stunted their growth, they were still babies feeding on milk, when they ought to have been able to. teach others.

How essential is the present truth as it is revealed from God's Word. The Word of God is the instrument not only for calling the saints, but also for supplying grace and strength and enabling them to meet the difficulties of the way.

It unfolds its precious truths as “meat in due season” to meet the needs of the Christian in his own day. It is then very essential that we understand present truth—the Word of God—as it opens up, in order that our Shield is bright and strong, our Helmet of hope is firmly fixed, the Breastplate of righteousness properly adjusted, that our feet be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, our loins be girt about with truth and that we may be able to wield the Sword of the Spirit, and be overcomers in the “good fight of faith.”

How important is the truth. It is the means by which we are sanctified and strengthened to run our course. Just as truth helps so error hinders.

How far may we differ from one another in respect of truth without interfering with our fellowship? The fact of differing on what we may call non-essentials provides opportunities for the exercise of brotherlikindness in respecting the opinions of others though not endorsing them.

It is quite a different matter when we come to deal with the clear lines of faith and hope, or truths which are Divinely revealed for the purpose of accomplishing some particular feature of work in connection with God's great plan. It would indeed be presumptuous to say that such truths were of so little

importance that it did not matter whether or not we believed them. We would also find it impossible to enjoy the same helpful fellowship with those who denied or belittled these things as we could with those who appreciated them, and who were seeking to faithfully sound forth the message and conform their lives to it.

It is quite understandable that those who do not know present truth, who do not recognise that we are living in “the days of the Son of Man,” and the harvest time of the age, etc., should think such things are non-essentials. They cannot see the present truth to be essentials if they do not recognise that the harvest work is in progress, and that the separating of the “wheat” from the “tares” is taking place. They cannot value the truths now revealed as we do, who realise the presence of the Lord as “Reaper,” and that He is now reckoning with His people respecting the use of their talents and their structure building of character and teachings, and that the present truth is indeed the feast which He promised to the faithful watchers in Luke 12:37 and Rev. 3:20: What may seem non-essential to some may be very essential to others, for it is the “present truth” which is doing the harvest work. On the one hand it sanctifies and prepares the Bride class for the great consummation of her hopes, and on the other hand it separates those who from some cause or other seem unable to understand it.

The “present truth,” or “meat in due season,” or the unfoldings of truths respecting the Divine Plan, the second presence of Christ, the Harvest, the gathering of the saints and the consummation of the age, etc., appear to be essential to those to whom they have been revealed, if they will make their calling and election sure. Those who lightly esteem such things will surely fail in the use of their talents.

Similar conditions existed at the first advent of our Lord. New truths were sent forth. Many were inclined to say such matters were all right and might be true, but they should not be carried too far, they were not essential, they could still hold on to the Law ceremonies and synagogue gatherings. The then “present truth” was, however, essential to such as the Lord was calling, and it did its work of separating the “wheat” from the “chaff.”

Let us not undervalue the things which God has revealed to us, which have opened our eyes to see the wideness of His purposes and shown us that we are at the end of the age and living in “the days of the Son of Man,” and that “as in the days of Noah” preceding the deluge, so now a great calamity is pending, which will end this dispensation, after which the new age will commence when Christ shall be King over all the earth.

These things we are exhorted to “hold fast” in the message to the Philadelphia Church. (Rev. 3:10-11). “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold I come quickly, hold fast that which thou hast that no man take thy crown.”

We are living in a day of such a variety of confused teachings. We are forewarned of the many deceptions that were to come, so that even if it were possible the very elect would be deceived. Peter says that there should be false teachers and that many would follow their pernicious ways, by reason of which the way of truth should be evil spoken of. Paul admonishes, “Be not carried about by strange doctrines, for it is good that the heart be established with grace.” The church is called “the pillar and ground of the truth.” It is her responsibility to preserve the truth in its purity, to guard it and to let it shine. Our Lord declared, “To this end came I into the world that I should bear witness to the truth,” and it is for those who will follow Him to do His work, and to be among those who are “beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God.”

Many are the injunctions of the Apostles respecting this matter of “Holding fast the form of sound words” and the truths which God has revealed in His Word. The following are some texts showing our

responsibility regarding knowledge :-2 Tim. 1:13; 2 Tim. 2:14-18; 2 Tim. 2:23-26; 2 Tim. 3:13-14; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 1 John 2:20-24; 1 John 3:1-3; 2 John 7-11; 1 Tim. 1:3-6; 1 Tim. 4:16; 1 Tim. 4:20-21 (Diaglott).

That, however, is not all we must “hold fast.” There is the possibility of holding fast the form of sound words, of having a correct understanding of the main features of the truth, even of being “virgins” (justified by faith) and of understanding “present truth,” and yet to fail to be prepared, and so fail to enter the marriage chamber.

A clear head is a good thing to have, but if the knowledge does not go down to the understanding heart, it fails in its intended purpose of sanctification, and we should prove to be but sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. The trials of our day will not only try the doctrines, but will test our faith, our hope, our love and our loyalty to God and to one another as members in Christ.

Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid in Christ Jesus. There is no standing before God apart from His Son, our Saviour, but having this foundation we must build thereon. What must we build?

We must build our doctrine and see that all our teachings are in line with the foundation; we must also build character. We must hold fast our foundation, our faith in the great Ransom for all. We must hold fast our consecration, our love to God in operation; we must bind the sacrifice with cords to the altar. We must “hold fast the confidence of our hope firm to the end.” We must keep on the whole armour of God and continue the good fight of faith. We must preserve our zeal for the Lord’s cause.

There is everything in this day to discourage us. Some have trials and temptations in one way, some in another. Maybe the failure of brethren whom we had highly esteemed in the Lord is apt to discourage us. Sometimes in contact with the world we meet plausible arguments against the truth by agnostics or scientists, and if we trusted to our own wisdom and strength to save us we might go down, but let us hold fast the Word of God. If we cannot understand everything, we do understand enough of God’s wisdom, justice, love and power, which we have exemplified in His dealings with Israel and explained in His Word and experienced in our own lives, so that we can reasonably trust where we cannot quite understand. Even our Lord Jesus was tested in this way. He could not understand why the light of the Father’s countenance should be withdrawn just at the moment when, more than any other, He needed the assurance of His favour and presence. We must nerve ourselves and seek to grow in grace that we too may reach that condition of heart that can say, “Yea, though He slay me yet will I trust Him.” •

Probably all can look back upon trials and temptations and trace the kind hand that has overruled for our protection, guidance and provision, and thus tracing the way God has led us shall we not hold fast the confidence of our faith firm to the end?

Let us hold fast our love to the Lord. If we love God we will also love those begotten of Him, and it will be painful indeed to us to even think evil of a fellow member. We would shun listening to reproaches against brethren we would be loyal to God and defend His children and each member in the body of Christ would be loyal to one another.

That loyalty, however, will be secondary to our loyalty to God and His Word and the doctrine we have proved to be true. It may be necessary for us to withdraw even from those we love in Christ, if they teach things which we believe to be contrary to the truths that we have been by God’s grace entrusted with, to preserve and to proclaim.

While we may thus sometimes find separations unavoidable, there is never any occasion to be unkind. We may have to speak plainly against wrong teachings or practices, but we are not to condemn nor cease to

love those who think differently. As long as they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour of mankind, by His own blood, and profess consecration to God, we may still think of them as brethren, though they may be erring brethren.

Let us hold fast our faith, our hope, our love, our doctrine, which includes “present truth.” “Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of knowing of whom thou hast learned them.” How important it is that we hold fast that which we have proved to be an unfolding of God’s Word—”Meat in due season.” If we begin to let slip this or that truth, other truths will likely soon be lost, and “if the light that is in thee become darkness, how great is that darkness? “Hold fast that which thou hast that no man take thy crown.” (Rev. 3:11).

Hope.

“What though the blossoms fall and die?
The flower is not the root;
The Sun of love may ripen yet
The Master’s pleasant fruit.”

“What though by many a wayward fall
Thy garment is defiled?
A Saviour’s blood can cleanse them all;
Fear not! thou art His child.”

“Arise! and leaning on His strength,
Thy weakness shall be strong;
And he will teach thy heart at length
A new perpetual song.”

“Arise! to follow in His track
Each holy footprint clear.
And on an upward course look back
With every brightening year.”

“Arise! and on thy future way
His blessing with thee be!
His presence be thy staff and stay
Till thou His glory see.”

—F. R. Havergal.

Bibles.

The following varieties of Bibles are now in stock, and prices mentioned include postage cost to any address:

Bible Students' Edition, Cambridge, India paper, Minion type, with Berean Manual .. 15/6

Oxford Concordance Bible, India paper, Emerald type, Persian Morocco, Silk sewed (a fine Bible, just to hand) Oxford Reference Bible, Minion type, well bound .. 15/9 Oxford Reference Bible, Emerald type, good binding, Oxford Reference Bible, Brevier type; a good useful

Others at lower prices are also available, and special Bibles can be procured as desired.

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 used, either in the correspondence or in the sermons reported,

I Cross (a) on the wrapper indicates that the Subscription to "Peoples Paper" is overdue.

The Witness Work.

WHILE at regular intervals attention is drawn to the privileges of witnessing for the truth by whatever means may be at the disposal of the Lord's people, a further reference at this time will not be out of place, specially as we have had some encouragement along this line.

As mentioned in our yearly reports for some years past, the use of free literature coupons in suitable newspapers has been a helpful means of placing the truth literature in the hands of a large number of people, with good results in quite a few cases. The Melbourne and Adelaide papers have been used mostly in the past, and with a view to encouraging the work amongst the friends in other centres one of our friends writes :— “It seems that perhaps more good could be done in this country by more advertising in the Saturday daily papers, or in suitable weeklies. I am wondering to what extent this has been tried, say, in Perth, Sydney or Brisbane, or throughout New Zealand and Tasmania. . . . It would be interesting to know to what extent the friends in the ‘various Classes throughout the Commonwealth would like to co-operate in placing the advert. in the most suitable newspapers in their various localities. Those Classes needing some assistance. to meet the cost could be helped from an Advertising Fund. I would like to offer an amount as a start to help a work of this kind.”

The spirit and assistance of this offer is much appreciated. Whilst realising that the chief work is amongst the brethren in this advanced stage of the harvest work, in encouraging and assisting them along the way, there is also, no doubt, a work yet to be done on behalf of those still desiring the refreshing and comforting message of truth here and there throughout this great land, as in other parts.

For the benefit of all, it is now mentioned that the Adelaide Class expect to use a coupon in the Christmas number of a suitable weekly paper in that city; we are to make use of a very suitable weekly in Melbourne at the same time, and arrangements are being made so that the same may be undertaken. in Sydney and Brisbane with the cooperation of friends there. Let us trust that with the witness going out from the four large cities, some real. good may result, according to the Lord's good will, and the prayers of the brethren are asked to that end. If but two or three are blessed by the truth message, what a privilege to be associated in such a work, and. the Lord is fully able to give the increase—we are not responsible for that. All literature supplied free to enquirers is provided by the general Tract Fund of the Institute, to which the brethren in all parts give support, as they are able.

Much more can be done with the coupons and tract distribution, etc. We shall be very pleased to hear from all Classes and individual brethren who are interested in this work, and would like to co-operate. Samples of coupons which have already been used with some good results will be gladly forwarded, also information as to financial assistance available to those unable to undertake the expense or all the expense in their particular localities.

The Birth of Christ.

“Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His from their sins.”—Matt. 1:21

THE great thought with the birth of Jesus is that the first-born of every creature left ‘ the glory of a spirit existence, the glory which He had enjoyed with the Father before the world was made, and in conformity to the Divine plan for human salvation, “humbled Himself,” to human nature, became a man, “was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us.”— John 1:14; Phil. 2:7-9. But, why did He do this? The Scriptures reply that He took our form and nature—the form of a servant—for the suffering of death. It was for the sin of man that He was to atone; and, to do so, to pay our debt, to give our ransom price, to be our substitute, He must be a man—that, as by a man came death, by a man also should come the resurrection of the dead.

No wonder, then, that the birth of the babe Jesus, the first step in the divine plan for our salvation from sin and death, was hailed by angels as well as by the wise men and the shepherds as a most notable, a most momentous event. And only those who see quite clearly the necessity for a ransom (a corresponding price), before sin could be forgiven or one member of the condemned race in Adam could be set free from.. the death penalty resting upon all, can appreciate the depth of meaning there is in that song which the angels sang: “Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will toward men.”

The great salvation of which the man Christ Jesus is the centre is all of divine arrangement—to the Father of glories therefore we ascribe the “highest” glory for all the blessings which through it we enjoy.

The infant Jesus was the first ray of light and hope to men; because He would become a man, and as the man would give His life a ransom for Adam and all condemned in him; and thus, by virtue of having paid our price, “bought us with His own precious blood (His life given),” He would be legally qualified before the divine law to be the “Mediator of the New Covenant,” made effective with His own precious blood—”the blood of the New Covenant shed for many for the remission of sins.”—Matt. 26:28.

The great plan for human salvation, begun by the birth of Jesus, has not yet reached completion. It will not be complete until His people have been saved from their sins and from the penalty of their sins—death, which includes degradation—mental, moral and physical. The ransom, thank God, has been paid, and Justice has accepted it; and now God is seeking out “His people.” First, during this Gospel Age, He seeks His peculiar people to be the “Bride of Christ,” and in the age to follow this, the Millennium, He will cause the knowledge of the divine offer of life under the terms of the New Covenant to be, made general: all shall know, and then, “whosoever will may take of the water of life freely.” And all whom He shall be willing to own as “His people” will gladly avail themselves of ,the gracious arrangements and return to full ‘favour with God—all others will be wilful sinners, and as such will be cut off from life in the Second Death.

Let us, then, who know ,the blessed story of the love of God in Christ tell abroad the gracious message, the foundation for which was laid in the birth of Jesus.—”Behold; we bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people.” “He shall save His people from their sins.” Let us make sure that we have accepted Him and are “His people.” Let us be true, wise men, and present to Him our treasures—all that we have and are-our hearts.

Christmas Gifts.

“Thou shalt receive gifts for men.”—(Psalm 68:18.)

Christmas gifts for thee,
Fair and free!
Precious things from the heavenly store,
Filling thy casket more and more;
Golden love in divinest chain,
That can never be untwined again;
Silvery carols of joy that swell

Sweetest of all in the heart's love cell;
Pearls of peace that were sought for thee
In the terrible depths of a fiery sea;
Diamond promises sparkling bright,
Flashing in farthest reaching light.
Christmas gifts for thee,
Grand and free!

Christmas gifts from the king of love
Brought from His royal home above;
Brought to thee in the far off land,
Brought to thee by His own dear hand.
Promises held by Christ for thee
Peace as a flowing river free,
Joy that in His own joy must live,
And love that Infinite love can give,
Surely thy heart of hearts uplifts
Carols of praise for such Christmas gifts.”

Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee.”

ONE of our friends has sent along the following in memory of the author of the above beautiful hymn, the 14th of this month being the centenary anniversary of her birthday. “Frances Ridley Havergal was born on -the 14th December, 1836, and, in due course, every talent she possessed was consecrated to the Lord. She recognised early that, In God’s great field of labour, all work is not the same; He hath a service for each one who loves His Holy Name,’ and, as we sing the praises so ably written and expressed by this servant, our thanks ascend to the ‘Giver of every good and perfect gift,’ for the faithfulness displayed in the use of these gifts. Her pen ceased not to declare in a most pleasing ministry the praises of Him who knew no sin.

Father, we bless Thee with heart and voice
For the wondrous grace of Thy sovereign choice,
That patiently, gently sought us out
In the far off land of death and doubt;
That drew us to Christ by the Spirit’s might,
That opened our eyes to see the Light,
That arose in strange reality
From the darkness that fell on Calvary. (Isa. 62:12; Eph. 2:13).

“There was also in her music constantly a sense of insufficiency in self, and a desire to ‘Let every thought be captive brought, Lord Jesus to Thine own sweet obedience--That I may know in ebb-less flow, the perfect peace of full and pure allegiance.’ (2 Cor. 10:5.).

‘While we would draw attention to her many delightful works, we would also call to remembrance that in her ministry much pain was endured, inasmuch that, in the employment of her talents for the Lord, many were drawn to herself. These she had to re-direct, and, whilst she cherished dearly the love and affection of many, she desired it only for Jesus. ‘I want you,’ was said to many, but I want you for Jesus.’

‘Singing for Jesus, our Master and Friend,
Telling His love and His marvellous grace,
Love for eternity, love without end;
Love for the loveless, the sinful and base,
Singing for Jesus and trying to win
Many to love Him and join in our song.’

“God has surely supplied all our need. Sonic may appreciate a particular ministry more than another, and yet, as (me string reverberates faithfully the music it is intended to sound, its companion strings will, if in tune, reciprocate and absorb sympathetically. One hundred years will not dim the music of love that rings out from the heart of Frances R. Tiavergal.”

“I know, O Lord, though all around is dark,
I need not fear;
Rough are the waves that toss my little bark,
But Thou art near.”

The Great Multitude of Rev. 7:9-17.

A THOUGHT has been expressed that these are human beings restored to perfection, but this view would not harmonise with the setting of this passage, nor with the Scriptures as a whole.

It would seem that the Revelation which John received was particularly in regard to matters concerning the history of the Church—the events of the Gospel Age leading to the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ on earth.

The Lord had indicated in His parables that the great system of error—the Roman Catholic Church—would develop; that truth would be so polluted and that tares' (imitation Christians) would become more plentiful than the wheat (true Christians). In this Revelation given to John symbols are given, which the developments of the age would lead the earnest student to comprehend as the fulfilment of these signs.

Until Christ came, and, by His death and Resurrection, became "worthy to open the Book" (which, until then, the Father had "kept in His own power," no one but the Heavenly Father knew what was to take place during the Gospel Age. The mystery was represented as a Book sealed with seven seals.

As these seals were one by one opened, John saw the visions recorded, and these symbolised certain features of the Gospel Age. The first six seals deal only with features between Pentecost and the second coming of Christ; but the seventh seal gives a full view from the first advent and the death of Our Lord, "as the Lamb slain," to the time -when all the willing and obedient will have been brought up the highway of holiness and presented perfect to God.

It will be noticed that the matters contained in Rev. 7, including the seeing of this great multitude, are observed by John after the breaking of the sixth seal, and therefore as there is no earthly promise held out for any during this Gospel Age—the calling of the present time being to a heavenly inheritance—this "great multitude," before the heavenly throne, must be heavenly, i.e., spirit beings. The Apostle definitely says, "we are all called in one. hope of our calling."

No one is called to be of this Great Multitude; all who came into Christ are called to be "joint-heirs with Him." "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." If we have received of His spirit, then "the spirit beareth witness that we are children of God, and if children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." (Rom. 8:9, 16, 17.)

However, whilst many are called, few are chosen (for the elect); many fail to make their calling and election sure. They allow the things of earth to attract and hold them back, and so they receive tribulation, hard experiences, to help them to give themselves entirely to the accomplishing of the Divine will. Paul says, regarding such an one, that he was handed over to Satan (to get experiences), so that the fleshly mind might be destroyed, "that the spirit (life) might be saved so as by fire." These would, while losing the great reward, yet be saved and ultimately gain the victory': but, instead of being on the throne as "joint-heirs with Christ," would be servants before the throne, probably of similar nature to the angels.

As no one is called to be of the Great Company there is no very definitely plain Scripture statement concerning the class. There are, however, several Scriptures that seem to show that there would be those to serve before the throne. For instance, in the beautiful picture of the selection of the Bride of Christ in Genesis 24, Rebecca, who signified the Bride, had her nurse, who was also brought across the same desert to the same place as her mistress and served her in the new home. In Psalm 45, too, the Bride or Queen in gold of Ophir had "the virgins her companions that followed her."

There are no hopes of an earthly nature held out to believers of the Gospel Age—the promises -are all spiritual. The justified human nature has been presented as a living sacrifice. (Rom. 12) The human nature having been placed on the altar must be consumed and cannot be reclaimed ; and it would indeed be a sad thing if there was no provision for all those who though at heart loyal to God and loving righteousness, had been overtaken by the good things of earth and hindered by the adversaries—the world, the flesh, and the devil from being counted overcomers to sit with Christ in His throne.

Paul speaks of such a class in I Cor. 2:12-15. They continued faithfully on the foundation Jesus Christ—trusting in His shed blood for their peace with God and hope of heaven; but their works have been faulty. They have not embroidered their garments (Psalm 45), or in other words, have not zealously prepared themselves by attaining the predestined character (Rom. 8:29)—"conformed to the image of God's dear Son." Though their works are unacceptable, and they fail to gain the prize of the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus," they are saved so as by fire,—fiery trials, great tribulations are permitted so as to assist them to let go the things of earth and overcome those things that hinder. They have "palms" of victory, • though are not "crowned"; they serve before the rainbow circled throne instead of "sitting with Christ in His throne, even as He overcame and is set down with His Father in His throne." (Rev. 3:21).

It has been suggested that this great multitude are human beings who will serve before the throne. on earth, and that Jerusalem is to be the throne-of the Lord. However, the scene in Rev. 7 is a heavenly one, and is before the rainbow circled throne. The multitude unnumbered are seen in white robes, and the time is at the close of the Gospel Age.

Not until the end of the reign of Christ when the Kingdom is to be handed over to God will the multitudes of earth be restored to righteousness and perfection (have white robes of their own), and have right to the tree of life. (Rev. 22:14.)

Other Scriptures in types or parables also indicate this great multitude—for instance, the Virgins Parable, and the scapegoat of Lev. 16. After Aaron's bullock had been slain and its blood applied in the Most Holy, the two goats from the people were brought to the vail of consecration. One is called the "Lord's goat," and that was dealt with the same as the bullock, only the incense offered with the bullock was evidently still burning in the Holy, thus making the Lord's goat acceptable, for with the goat itself no incense is mentioned. So it is the perfect doings of our Lord Jesus (whose humanity was represented by the bullock) which is incense sweet to God, Making the prayers of the saints who walk in His steps acceptable. (Rev. 8:3, 4.) The other goat for "Azazel" (see margin), the scapegoat, well represents those who need the wilderness experiences—the tribulations, the fiery trials—so that their flesh may be destroyed and their spirits be saved so as by fire.

This is a gracious provision of the Divine Plan, which would seem incomplete otherwise, for so many coming short of the mark for the great prize of the high calling would otherwise be simply lost, although, in their hearts, they really loved God and righteousness. So it is that Paul says that in the Resurrection one star differeth from another in glory, and our Lord declared, "In My Father's house (universe) there are many places of abode." There will be the Twelve Apostles, the twenty-four elders, the 144,000, and the cherubim and seraphim—"All things in heaven"—and then the Ancient Worthies, natural Israel and the whole race of mankind, small and great—"all things on earth" shall be gathered together in one. (Eph. 1:10, 20-23.)

Melbourne Convention.

The Melbourne Class have arrangements well in hand for the Christmas Convention, to be held over the four days from December 25th to Monday. 28th—D.V.

The gatherings will be held at Clyde House, 182 Collins street (first floor. Room 5), near Town Hall, Melbourne; with afternoon and evening sessions, each day. Tea will be provided for all in attendance.

Visiting brethren are expected from various parts, and all able to attend this Convention may feel sure of a hearty welcome.. Programmes are now available and accommodation can be arranged as desired.

Bible Helps and Other Items in Stock.

Special Xmas and New Year Offer.—For the months of December and January the following studies will be available to all desiring to take advantage of them for presents, etc.:—“Foregleams of the Golden Age,” at 2/- per copy. “Divine Plan of the Ages” (in red cloth binding) and “Some of the Parables,” for 1/3 the two, posted to any address.

“Divine Plan of the Ages.”—Bound in blue cloth, with gold lettering. One of the finest Bible Helps available. Price, 2/6 per copy. Other editions at cheaper rates.

“Plan of God in Brief.”—Containing selections from the above book in handy form; very useful for passing on the message. Price, 6d. each.

“God and Reason.”—A helpful booklet of 124 pages. Posted to any address for 10d. per copy, paper cover; 2/- per copy, nicely bound in cloth.

“A Review of the Doctrines.”—This helpful little book by Bro. H. J. Shearn of England. Price 1/6 posted,

“What Pastor Russell Said.”—His answer to hundreds of questions. 780 pages. A limited number available in cloth and leather binding at 7/- and 8/6 each, posted.

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ.”—Two helpful volumes on Revelation by the late Bro. Streeter.

“Daniel, the Beloved of Jehovah.”—A volume on Daniel’s prophecy; by the same author.

“The Desolations of the Sanctuary.”—A very useful book, with special reference to the tests upon the Lord’s people in these last days.

“Daily Heavenly Manna.”—This little hook in pocket size, makes a very useful present, In two bindings—leather at 2/6 (60 cents) per copy; cloth at 1/9 (40 cents) per copy; both gold-stamped, and with red edges.

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Post Cards. — New selections of cards with helpful Scriptural verses, etc., recently arrived from England, and are well recommended for Christmas and New Year greetings, or general use. Real hand-tinted photo postcards, assorted, 2/6 per dozen; 1/3 per half-dozen. Different variety, very nice also, with encouraging words, assorted, 1/4 per dozen; 9d. per half-dozen. Others on hand at 1/-per dozen, or 1d. each. When ordering, please state clearly which kind is desired. A few only of best variety now available.

Bookmarks.—Assorted bookmarks at 2d. and 4d.

Also wall-texts, including “My Morning Resolve,” at 4d. each.

Christian Hymns.—Bound in blue cloth, words only, 10d. per copy. Also music books for practically the same hymns at 2/- each.

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