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Upon the Earth Distress with Perplexity.

(LUKE 21:25)

The Troubled World's Hope.

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

spirit is gradually eating its way among all nations. Unemployment is prevalent everywhere. The overcrowded parts of the world are puzzled to know what to do with the great surplus of population.

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

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

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

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

The Desire of All Nations.

Both the Old and New Testaments predict that a better time is coming: a time when justice and righteousness will be

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

Peter, in his second epistle, chapter 3, speaks also of a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and also describes the great time of trouble preceding the establishment of same. He speaks of the heavens being on fire, and being dissolved, "The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." It is clear that the apostle is speaking in figurative language, for if the earth and the heavens were literally to be so destroyed, there would be no people left to enjoy the "new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," which he assures us is to follow the burning-up time, just as the prophet declares that after the great shaking "the desire of all nations shall come."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Satan will be bound; his every deceptive and misleading influence will be restrained, so that evil shall no longer appear

to men to be good, nor good appear undesirable, and evil; truth shall no longer appear to men untrue, nor falsehoods be caused to appear true (Rev. 20:2).

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

Obstacles to Belief in Christ’s Kingdom.

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

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

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

Why the Long Delay?

The long delay and its purposes are clearly marked in the Scriptures. Over four thousand years after the first promise of deliverance, given in Eden (Gen. 3:15), the redemption was accomplished on Calvary. Nearly two thousand years more fill the measure of the Gospel Age during which time God is selecting and developing the

Church—the Bride of Christ. Furthermore, this long period of six thousand years was designed to give the race a necessary experience with the dreadful effects of sin, its exceeding sinfulness, and the firmness of that justice which will by no means clear the guilty violators of God’s just and holy law. Such an experience will be of inestimable value to all for all eternity and by contrast it will lead to so great an appreciation of righteousness, during Christ’s reign, as to make it, when realised, what the prophet predicted—“The desire of all nations.”

The delay, from the time of the redemption to the Kingdom Age, while fulfilling this purpose to the world, serves particularly the further purpose—the development of the Church, a “little flock” of believers in and followers of Christ, sharers of His reproach in the present time, and therefore chosen and counted worthy to share His spiritual Kingdom, His glory, and His work, to reign with Him as joint-heirs of the long-promised Kingdom of God for the blessing of all the families of the earth.—Gen. 28:1.4; Gal. 3:16, 29.

Present So-Called Christian Kingdoms. During the first century of its existence the church held firmly to the apostolic teaching and waited for the second coming of the Lord Jesus, to bring the establishment of the long- promised kingdom of God, with its rule of righteousness.

That first century was the period of the church’s purity and fervour, before she left her first love. As time passed, and the expected Lord came not, the love of many waxed cold, and their hopes turned in other directions. Then, as Christianity became formalistic, Grecian philosophers came into the church, and the doctrines of Christ became blended with heathen mythologies, producing the great apostasy, or falling away from the true faith (2 Thes. 2:3). Nevertheless, there was always a faithful though small minority, which clung to the truth.

It was at this time 'hat the degenerated Christian system conceived the view commonly held since, that the church was to establish Christ's Kingdom and that Christ would come after the Millennial reign of the church had ended. This view introduced into the nominal church an aggressive political policy, under which the church sought influence and affiliation with the civil power—(Rev. 17:3-5, 18:7).

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

Thus it comes that the kingdoms of Europe to-day claim to be Christian kingdoms, and announce that their sovereigns reign "by the grace of God," i.e., through appointment of either Papacy or some of the Protestant sects.

For though the Reformers abandoned many of Papacy's claims to ecclesiastical jurisdiction, etc., they held to this honour which the kings of earth had come to attach to Christianity; and thus the Reformers fell into the same error, and exercised the authority of monarchs in appointing and sanctioning governments and kings, and denominating such "Christian kingdoms," or kingdoms of Christ. So we hear much to-day of that strange enigma, "The Christian World" — an enigma indeed, when viewed in the light of the true principles of the Gospel.

Christ's Kingdom—The Desire of All Nations

When Christ's Kingdom has come, it will be just what all men need. At first it will rule with a rod of iron, dashing the now tottering kingdoms of this world in pieces like a potter's vessel (Psa. 2:9); breaking up civil, social and religious systems of tyranny and oppression; putting down all opposing authority and power; humbling the proud and high-minded; and finally teaching all the world to be still and to know that the Lord's Anointed has taken the dominion (Psa. 46:10). Then the blessing of its peaceful reign will begin to be experienced. Truth and equity will be established on a sure and permanent footing; justice will be laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet (Isa. 28:17); and the great restitution work will progress grandly to its glorious consummation.

No creature of the redeemed race will be too low for Divine grace to reach, through the all-powerful and blessed agency of the Kingdom. No degradation of sin will be too deep for the hand of mercy to fathom. to rescue the blood-bought soul; no darkness of ignorance or superstition will be so dense in any heart but that the light of Divine truth and love will penetrate its gloom and bring to it a knowledge of the joy and gladness of the new day, and an opportunity to share the same by obedience. No disease that can attack and pollute the physical system will be beyond the prompt control of the great Physician. And no deformity, monstrosity, redundancy, or mental imbecility will be able to resist His healing touch.

The grand work of restitution, thus begun on the living nations, will presently extend to all the sleeping families of the earth; for the hour is coming, yea, is not far distant, when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth; when earth and hell (hades, the grave) shall give up the dead which are in them; and the sea shall give up its dead (John 5:28-29; Rev. 20:13).

What a glorious prospect! the changes from one dispensation to another in the past have been marked and prominent, but this change will be the most eventful of all. Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay—not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realise the resurrection work complete.—Rev. 2 1:4.

No wonder that the thought of such a spectacle—of a whole race returning to God with songs of praise and everlasting joy upon their heads—should seem almost too good to believe; but He who has promised is able also to perform all His good pleasure. Though sorrow and sighing seem almost inseparable from our being, yet "sorrow and sighing shall flee away"; though weeping in sackcloth and ashes has endured throughout the long night of the dominion of sin and death,

yet joy awaits the morning; all tears shall be wiped from all faces; beauty shall be given for ashes; the oil of joy shall replace the spirit of heaviness, and the whole earth shall be at rest.—Isa. 14:7.

The Church's Hope.

A clearer knowledge of the world's hope should, and does, increase the church's appreciation of God's loving arrangement for His creatures. It adds new lustre to the church's hope when we realise that the glorious object of the call and discipline of the church in this Gospel Age is for the development of characters, which being proved loyal to God, to righteousness and truth will be associated with Christ in the great and grand work of uplifting whosoever will of men out of ignorance, sin, and degradation, into God's likeness, and favour, and love. The apostle declares "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:3). It is a hope that helps onward to God and holiness. All interested in the further study of this blessed hope should address us for reading matter.

Making Pearls.

IN the last book of the Bible we are shown a vision of the City of God with its twelve gates, every gate a pearl.

Every road into the Holy City, every entrance into the heavenly life, is through a gate of pearl.

What does it mean? It all becomes plain enough if we learn how a pearl is made. And here is the story, as science tells it.

A wound is made in a shell, and a grain of sand, perhaps, gets embedded in the wound. At once all the resources of repair are rushed to the place of hurt. The wound may be made by any of the thousand accidents and vicissitudes of the life of the shell. But when the hurt has been healed, a softly tinted pearl is found closing the wound.

In other words, the Gates of Pearl, by which we enter the City of God, are made by our defeats, injuries, hurts, losses and heartaches on earth; every gate a Pearl. There is no easy way to the highest life, no rosy road to clear insight and understanding. If to us life sometimes seems to be too hard, it is because we do not know what we are saying.

But, it may be asked, does suffering always ennoble us? Manifestly not. In suffering as such, there is no value or meaning apart from the way we take it. The natural reaction to pain, suffering, defeat, is resentment, rebellion, and if it is long continued, bitter despair if not degradation. That is to turn defeat into disaster.

There is another way of facing the worst that can happen to us, without letting it make the worst of us. There is a way of finding in our own souls a faith, a courage, a power by which we may endure and triumph over anything that life or death can do to us, turning darkness into light, making a hurt into a gem.

It is not a pious theory; it is a matter of observable fact. Look into the lives of those whom you most admire for their worth and beauty of character, and you will find that each of them has faced loss, difficulty, pain, disappointment — and won out. God knows it is not easy to do, but it can be done, it has been done, and we can do it, too—Selected.

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, either in the correspondence or in the sermons reported,

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

The Past Twelve Months

EACH year's work for the Berean Bible Institute, closes with April, and we feel that the past twelve months has been an encouraging and helpful period again by the Lord's overruling providence. It is to our Heavenly Father that much praise and thanksgiving is rendered as we call to mind the many privileges and blessings received at His hands in connection with the work. To the dear brethren also, both near and far, who have assisted and co-operated by prayer and means in every way in the service of the truth, sincere appreciation is extended.

The work each year is along similar lines—mainly in the publication of our monthly "Peoples Paper," supplying literature in the interests of the brethren, maintaining a centre of correspondence for the benefit of all and providing free literature for general distribution.

In September last, the office of the Institute was transferred to the present address and, as expected, the change has provided additional means of service and is beneficial in every way.

The circulation of the "Peoples Paper" has continued at about the same number, many readers expressing appreciation of its contents. It is compiled with articles contributed by various brethren and for which we are very grateful. The message of "present truth" is proclaimed continuously, as well as the other features of the great plan of redemption on behalf of the world of mankind. A number unable to subscribe, are on the free list, and as the "Paper" is not self-supporting the balance is made up from the Tract Fund. All that is necessary in the case of friends desiring the visits of the "Paper" but who are unable to provide the subscription, is that request be made each year and it will be gladly continued. Extra copies and back numbers are freely supplied to all zealous enough to pass them on where good may be done and perhaps other subscriptions result.

In the early part of the past year, the second edition of our pocket "Daily Heavenly Manna" was produced, and is being distributed and appreciated overseas, as well as in Australasia. Our general Bible Helps have also been placed in the hands of readers over a wide area with some good results. Now, at this time, the producing of "The Bible

Teachings on the Covenants, Mediator, Ransom, Sin's Offering and Atonement" is to be undertaken, notice of which will be found in this issue.

The advertising of free literature by newspaper coupons has further advanced throughout the past twelve months. More co-operation has been manifest on the part of Classes and individual brethren and the results have been very encouraging. Other benefits are no doubt received of which nothing is heard. There is scope for further activity in this direction, and as mentioned in December 1936 issue of "Peoples Paper," arrangements can be made to assist Classes or individual brethren desiring to engage in this witness work, who are unable to bear the expense, or all the expense in their particular localities. Should no suitable paper for this work exist where some friends may like to help, their efforts could be combined with others where better results could be obtained.' The free literature for all enquirers is provided by the Tract Fund.

The general tract distribution has been carried on with steady effort on the part of a number of friends. Some allot a portion of their time to this work and visit the homes, passing the papers personally to those who will promise to read; others keep the tracts on hand to enclose in their correspondence, etc. Good supplies of various topics are on hand, the main article of this issue,—"Upon the Earth Distress with Perplexity"—being available again in quantities. An economical method of procuring the papers is to have some enclosed each month with your "Peoples Paper"; while those able to use larger numbers to advantage can have parcels sent at any time. All should feel free to order what tracts they can profitably use as a talent of time should not be wasted any more than other talents.

The Tract Fund Account shown below represents the financial aid received for the work and expenditure met over the twelve months' period. Much sacrificing is no doubt represented in the freewill offerings of the brethren, and inasmuch as it has been rendered as unto the Lord, we trust all have realised His blessing in thus doing what they could, in the service of our Master and His truth. The increase over the previous year has enabled more to be done in various branches of the work, and in the balance carried forward to commence the new year, a small credit is included especially available for advertising.

As we enter upon another years' work, realising the momentous times at hand, it is with faith and confidence in the Lord that we look for His guidance- and the necessary grace and strength to fulfil all His good pleasure. The many loving and cheering messages from the brethren and assurances of prayers on our account are much appreciated and most encouraging. It is humbly requested that we. May share a continued interest in the prayers of the brethren and assure the dear friends everywhere of our warm Christian love for them and remembrance before the throne of heavenly grace. It is a pleasure to hear from all regularly and any suggestions for assisting or improving the work in these closing days of the age will be gladly received. May the efforts of the Lord's people everywhere be directed towards still more progress and upbuilding in the graces and fruits of the holy spirit, by the truth, both personally and to all with whom they come in contact, and to this end the service of the Institute exists. "To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's: Grace be unto you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Tract Fund Account.

To Balance Carried Forward ..	L143	3		
Donations Received ..	1663	9		
£1807		0		
By Coupon Advertisements, Pilgrim Work and				
	Public Meetings ..		#130	0
178	2			
Free Tracts and Deficiency "People's Paper"	7819	0		
„General Expenses (Office, etc.)	3312	8	
^Personal and House ..	100	0		
„Baptism Service ..	10	0		
267		2		
#1807		0		

The Bible Teachings on the Covenants, Mediator, Ransom, Sin-Offering, Atonement,

With the responses from some brethren to hand, in reply to the notice in last month's "People's Paper" respecting the duplicating of the book on the above subjects, it now seems clear that the work should be undertaken. While the demand is as yet comparatively small we feel sure that many more friends will avail themselves of this book on these very important truths when they realise it will be available. It is necessary to add that the new work will be exempt from the personal and other references found in "What P.R. Taught" which are quite apart from the truths discussed, but the index and page numbers will still be preserved. It is proposed also that it should take the title as above and to have it bound into a book which will make it handier and more durable than in the larger form suggested in last month's notice, and giving a much better appearance.

Some time will be taken in getting this work through, but we expect to commence in the present month (D.V.). The price will be as low as possible—the book being prepared for service and not profit. An announcement as to cost will be made next month. It would be appreciated if other friends desiring copies could forward their orders as soon as possible. It will be a most useful book for class study or individual use.

Bible Study Meetings.

Regular Class Meetings for Bible Study, etc., are hold each Sunday afternoon and evening, also mid-week, in Melbourne and Adelaide, at the following addresses:-

Clyde House, 182 Collins Street, First Floor. Room 5, near Town Hall, Melbourne.

Liverpool Buildings, Flinders Street Adelaide, South Aust.

The gatherings are quite unsectarian, and all desiring to attend will be very welcome.

Contentment.

(Convention Address.)

“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”—Heb. 13:5.

THE same apostle that spoke the words of our text, said, “Godliness with contentment is great gain,” (1 Tim. 0: 0) and we notice it is the contentment with piety that constitutes the gain. There are people who are contented in themselves, in their own satisfied condition, which is perhaps anything but godly. However, the world in general is very discontented, and can we wonder that it is so, under the conditions that prevail at the present time?

With the true Christian, begotten of the truth, how different it should be. He sees what the world does not see—why God is permitting all the sufferings and sorrows, etc. Whoever has heard the glorious message, in the true sense of hearing, . that is with the hearing of faith and acceptance, has received what might be termed a double blessing. If the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to the Lord through the blood of the cross, the Christian’s first experience in grace, was a great blessing, still more is the second blessing a cause for fullness of joy, in that it has brought to us the begetting of the holy spirit, whereby we become sons of God. We would reveal ourselves as very ungrateful and unthankful if we were not content with these blessings which we have; under adverse circumstances we have such things that should console us and make us happy.

All, of us who have taken up the position of followers of Christ in an intelligent manner, knew right at the start that the way would be narrow, strait and rough, and that we should content ourselves with being a nobody, to being beheaded—that our wills should be the will of our Lord. If we fully meant it when we sang that good old hymn:

“Not to ourselves again,
Not to the flesh we live;
Not to the world henceforth shall we
Our strength, our being give,

No truce with vanity,
Or this world’s idle show:
Dead to this world, and all
Its gaiety and pride,” etc.

we would certainly be content and feel, “No longer far from rest I roam; my soul is satisfied at home; the Lord my portion is.” Thus making melody in our hearts, though disappointments come, we can know no real disappointment because we accept what the Lord has measured out for us.

When we see the example of our Lord in suffering and enduring patiently the mockings and contradiction of sinners against Himself, and also that of the Apostles who followed closely in His footsteps, this all indicates that we of the present time, who have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin and the wiles of Satan, have much for which to be thankful that our lines have fallen into such pleasant places. ‘We have no reason whatever to murmur and yet can we all say we do not murmur over our lot, which may not be very pleasing to us. Then, perhaps there is some resentment against others who have done things of which we are dissatisfied and unhappy, yet there it is and we must fight it.

We are not only to be appreciative of the smooth places along the narrow way in which the Lord gives rest to our weary feet, but we must be thankful also for all trials and tribulations, for does not the Apostle inform us that tribulations work out the fruits of the spirit. We must lay hold by faith on the assurances of the Lord’s Word that all things are working together for good to those who have made their covenant with Him and are striving to perform it. Though many trials and -difficulties at the time may seem grievous, they will be seen later on to be blessings, designed to develop in us a character like unto our Lord’s which is to make us fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. We must certainly take precautions not to rush into temptation, nor to bring upon ourselves persecution by unwise or foolish conduct, yet when these things come to us as the result of fidelity to principles of truth and righteousness exercised in the spirit of meekness, we may rejoice in them as so many ministries of evil toward us and which under divine guidance are fitting and preparing us to further reflect the Lord’s likeness and be His ambassadors for righteousness.

An explanation by one, on these things, seems very appropriate here,—’Evidently only a small number of those who have named the name of Christ and who have made consecration of life and time and influence to Him have ever appreciated these matters in their true light, and hence, not only are the so-called Christian nations the most discontented people of the world, but professed Christians are often among the most discontented and unhappy of

individuals. Even some of those who have made consecration to the Lord, and who have come to a considerable knowledge of present truth and respecting the present time in which we are living, are not enjoying the rest which God provides for His people but are unhappy, restless and are among the discontented.” So we realise that these are not having “the peace which passeth all understanding,” to rule in their hearts, at the same time keeping all the other affairs of life in subjection and in proper order. Such things ought not to be, and it behoves all who are in this condition to see to it that it does not continue.

Whatever we have more than necessity, is that much more than the Lord has promised to us in this present time, and it should be a cause for thankfulness of lip and gratitude of heart. If we fully understood and viewed things rightly, where would be the occasion or the desire to complain or murmur about such things or conditions that we have?

Where would be the desire to wish for, hope for, or ask for more than the Lord has promised to give us, and more than His wisdom has seen would be best for us? If all these lessons which come to us were observed and received into the good soil of honest hearts, they would bring forth, under the guidance of divine care, a hundredfold more of peace, joy, trust, contentment, happiness and love in the lives of all who put them into use. Thus the influence upon all others around us will also be helpful and beneficial.

Let us take for an instance the discontent expressed upon the condition of the weather; as a matter of course a great many people use it, just as an expression, perhaps, without feeling any discontent. Others again will complain that it is too hot, or too cold, too windy, too wet, or too dry and thus growl and grumble their way through life. However, we have the great consolation of knowing that the time will come when such will growl and grumble no more.

Those who moan and murmur do succeed somewhat in making things different around them and that is, they make many feel very miserable in their atmosphere. Why, there are enough black and dark days arising which need brightening by the best influence we can muster; how much we should help to make others feel more contented, by Manifesting the spirit of contentment. We remember the words of a good old hymn,—”If our faces lighten, let it clearly prove, that we seek to brighten, those ‘mongst whom we move.”

In past experiences it has been observed how some depressed and melancholy people have been much cheered by the influence of another who had been through similar experiences, and had lived them down to a great extent. If we are not in the best of health, it is little use moaning and complaining; let us feel thankful that it is no worse. We do not want to be like those who meet so much trouble that never comes. Whatever, therefore, we have, may we be thankful and grateful, realising how much worse it could be, and thus upholding a standard of endurance that is commendable.

When the Apostle says, “Be content with such things as you have,” it is not only a good medicine to console us and bring us spiritual health and joy in the Lord; but it is also very beneficial for our physical health. There is not the slightest doubt that many people aggravate their complaints and diseases physically, by an imaginary and unhappy condition of mind.

The Psalmist says, “Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thy heart”; and what would these desires be? Surely nothing that would be against His will, for we pray “Thy will be done,” and should be contented whatever our course may be. So, may we “commit our ways unto the Lord, trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass; rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him.” He will bring the things to pass if it is really best for us, and we so desire; and if it is not best for us, far better it is that it does not come to pass, for He knows better than we, what is best for our different dispositions.

While the Word of God abounds in precepts and admonitions, warnings and instructions, and lifts high the standard of moral excellence, so high that in our weak condition we cannot attain unto it, and in our efforts to do so in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation we encounter the anger of the powers of darkness entrenched in the hearts of fallen men, this same Word comes to the faithful in the very midst of this battle with refreshing consolation. If our position in life is a humble one and requires plenty of hard work to gain the necessary things in life, let us not complain, but on the other hand may we be thankful for the health and strength to perform the needed labor; thankful that the present short life is the schooling time, that the lessons of our experiences rightly learned will bring riches of grace and glory which the world can neither give nor take away. We need to realise how favorably situated we are in that we have such riches of faith, trust and contentment made available to us.

The Apostle has urged us to be “content with such things as ye have,” and gives the reason,—”for He hath said,

I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” This is the true ground of contentment — the realisation of the Lord’s care and that His wisdom and grace are being exercised toward us and that such things as He grants are the things which are best for us and which we would choose for ourselves if we had sufficient wisdom and insight into all the circumstances

of the case. So, then, we may boldly say, “the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

The testings which the Lord designs for His people are not merely doctrinal tests, and consequently we can expect that separations amongst those who come to a knowledge of the truth will be considerably along the lines of character and of the fruits of the spirit. The Lord’s final decision is, “If any man have not the spirit (disposition or mind) of Christ, he is none of His.” It is of the greatest importance that all soldiers of the cross put on not only the intellectual covering, “the helmet of salvation,” but also the heart covering, love of righteousness and truth, goodness and purity with “the shield of faith.” The “breastplate of righteousness” will be found to be one of the most important pieces of armour in the battle which is upon us, and respecting which we are told that thousands shall fall at our side.

The fruits of the spirit will not grow in the garden of the soul where the weeds of discontent are permitted to sap the strength and taint the air with their noxious presence and influence. The sentiments of another of our hymns is quite to the point and we desire for all the Lord’s people that condition of faith, consecration and contentment which will permit us to sing from the heart with the spirit and understanding.

“He helped His saints in ancient days
Who trusted in His name;
And we can witness to His praise,
His love is still the same.

His presence sweetens all our cares
And makes our burdens light;
A word from Him dispels our fears,
And gilds the gloom of night.”

Let us remember that we will not be faithful in large things unless we have learned to be faithful in little things. May we all faithfully continue the transformation of our lives along this line of godliness with contentment in all the affairs of life. We will thus be preparing ourselves for greater trials and tests that the Lord may be pleased to impose later that we may be developed unto every good work and meet for His use in the Kingdom now at hand.

Today’s Furrow.

Sow the shining seeds of service
In the furrows of each day;
Plant each one with serious purpose,
In a hopeful tender way.

Never lose one seed, nor cast it
Wrongly with a hurried hand;
Take full time to lay it wisely
Where and how thy God hath planned.

Thus the blessed way of sharing
With another soul your gains,
Which though losing life, you find it
Yielding fruit on golden plains;

For the soul which shows its blessings,
Great or small, in word or smile,
Gathers as the Master promised,
Either here or afterwhile.

Sow this day the seeds of service
in some life as you can spare.
Bend above the soul you strengthen
For a moment’s silent prayer.

Trust that somehow God will nurture
Deeds which love and faith afford,
Till the angel hands shalt reap them
For the garner of the Lord.

—Selected.