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Silent Times.

(Convention Address)

SILENT times come to us from various causes, and many kinds of lessons are possible.

(1) When silence refreshes the weary soul. Courage is renewed ; faith is enlightened; hope is bolstered ; prayer rewards with added patience ; before this silence is broken by the ordinary routine, the joys of faith stimulate and refresh like a draught of cool water on a hot day. Jesus drew on this kind of silence when He retreated into the mountain for prayer and solitude. Sometimes it was after a busy, or very trying experience, and sometimes it was before some impending crisis.

(2) Another kind of silence, which very few welcome, to be alone with the Truth. People invent all kinds of activities, devices, inventions and noises rather than be alone with the silence of contemplation. Despite all efforts, silence eventually overtakes all, and then some discover what poverty of truth really means.

(3) Silence sometimes can be used in defence of Truth.

(4) And sometimes it can be an offensive weapon.

(5) Exercised aright it could be for your welfare ; on the other hand, it may react to your disadvantage.

(6) With it you sometimes can teach another person a bigger lesson than all the words in the English language. It is not necessary to have the last word in an argument.

The preceding half a dozen kinds of silence are by no means all that could be mentioned, but will suffice for our discussion. If there's a time to speak and a time to be silent, there must be reasons governing each attitude. If we examine the reasons, or motives for certain silent periods, it is surprising how knowledge and understanding may be enlarged and developed.

In the life of Jesus there were many silent periods, silent experiences. After the announcement of His birth to the lonely shepherds there was an angelic anthem from the heavenly host. This mighty "Hallelujah Chorus" swelling from the heavenly choir was reserved for certain shepherds tending their sheep in the silent fields of the Judean hills. Their ears must have been in tune with Heaven's wavelength, for they

heard what must have been the sublimest anthem ever presented to human perception. This idea is preserved by the hymn writer—"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear." The angels sang of Jesus.

The celestial strains proposed that the City of David had been honoured with a Royal birth—in an outbuilding of the inn. (This discord only made the beautiful better than ever.) The beauty of that sublime hymn would be enhanced after the shepherds had seen for themselves the wonderful thing that had come to pass. Thereafter, memory would rehearse, in a silent time, the events of this night. We have been initiated into, and share this silent ecstasy of appreciation. We did not hear the original hymn, but it continues to echo and re-echo among earth's out-of-the-way places, being a little more audible in the lonely and silent regions. Nor is it reserved for shepherds; the Lord's "sheep" and "lambs" share.

After Simeon and Anna the prophetess had both thanked God for the blessed privilege of actually seeing the long-promised Seed, Mary and Joseph, dumbfounded and bewildered at the things that had been spoken of Jesus, returned with Him to Nazareth. Apart from the brief record, "The child grew, waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him," there is a blanket of silence thrown over these formative years. The first twelve years, from the world's point of view, of the heralded, but now unknown, Saviour, were passed in obscurity. The silence of the Scriptures speak loudly concerning the silence of His Messianic reputation among His companions. No glare of publicity or sunlight before the due time. Among other things this, of course, was a safety-first measure. As it was, an unsuccessful attempt was made on His life during the first two years. This terrifying experience was not lost on Joseph and Mary, for after their return from Egypt, wisely, they went into hiding—silence. So absorbed were they in this silence, in this security from notoriety and molestation, they had to be reminded by Jesus when He was 12 years of age, that His mission, His purpose in life, was destined for "the Father's business". However, the due time for publicity, for public presentation had not yet arrived, and they all returned to the home town of Nazareth, Jesus being not only subject to their kindly oversight, but subject to the safety and seclusion of silence.

We have written of those tender years, the silent years, that God had a watchful eye over His most prized Treasure: "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant." We all know how tender plants, even in the best-cared gardens, need special attention. But how much more would a tender plant need, maturing in dry, parched, thirsty ground? Extra special care would certainly be necessary. This extra care, or part of it, was available in the form of silence—obscurity. Jesus was respected as a normal, natural inhabitant, but all the while silently growing in "wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and man." It was neither difficult nor unreasonable to believe He must have had a lovable, kindly, friendly nature, appreciated by all and sundry. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" implies that Jesus assisted Joseph in the woodworking business. Yet Jesus is silent regarding those years when He assisted the kindly Joseph. There is wisdom in this silence. Just imagine the discouragement (or hatred) had He set Himself up as a critic among carpenters in the woodworking world. And what idolatry and mercenary competition might have resulted had work belonging to Him been initialled—pieces of antiquity fashioned by the carpenter's Son. What gains could have been made by forging the trade mark of Jesus and Joseph. It was better for all that those years were silent years. He was more concerned with the fashioning of character, and the tools used in that process, than fashioning pieces of wood.

It will be remembered that at the baptism of Jesus a Voice was heard, saying, "Thou art my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." What an exciting experience, to have God's assurance that He was *very pleased* with the consecration of His Son for this period in His life. It would be like an advanced student getting exam results showing passes with credits in all subjects. Such a student would be eager for the "final". His approach to the final would be with confidence and justified hope. If this was so with Jesus (and why not, with such glowing praise from on High?), He was soon to suffer such fatigue and weariness to dampen any idea that the next test would be easy. Immediately after that ecstasy of spirit the Voice

must have produced, He was drawn into the silence of the wilderness. This silent time of forty days and nights must have been as black and foreboding as the human mind could stand. The cheering sunbeam of the Voice piercing the black clouds of sin hanging so low over mankind would by contrast show those clouds blacker than could be imagined. The *sunshine* of Sonship was eclipsed by earth's dark shadows. What a crucial period this was, when the plan of action of the coming ministry must be sifted and marshalled for service. During this silent time Jesus, in person, had "got away from it all," but in spirit the conflict must have been well nigh unbearable. Added to the mental conflict there was hunger, thirst, rocks for pillows, wild beasts for companionship. To cap it all the Adversary beguiled with his three-point so-called plan of "salvation". This was no majestic sublime silence where the tranquillity of peace and serenity rejoiced in unison with the calm influences of Nature.

This was the first major battle of Righteousness against all the unseen evil forces arraigned against mankind. It was a momentous occasion, and a monument should have been erected in that wilderness to commemorate the decisive reverse suffered by man's great arch-enemy. And this battle was fought in silence. Disputes over national boundaries are mostly waged with much commotion and strife, yet a contention where the stakes involved are man himself and his Edenic paradise, is fought in silence.

The birds singing in the wilderness trees would be unaware of the raging conflict billowing over the lonely silent Creature for 40 days and nights. Earlier it was mentioned that until Jesus was about 30 He experienced silent *years*. The silent years almost overnight now became silent *days*. Very soon, in an active ministry embracing the work of a Good Physician with no end of patients ; a Teacher whose numberless pupils included those with no resources and were so slow in learning; a ministry catering for multitudes of poor, afflicted, common, ignorant folk; a ministry persecuted and hounded by the strong and influential in the land . . . very soon He was hard-pressed to find silent *hours*.

The following three and a half years, crammed to overflowing with acts of mercy, healings, teachings, journeys, must have passed so quickly that silent *moments* now became precious. Occasionally the solitary, silent confines of a mountain brought refreshment after a night of prayer. Jesus knew the value of secret silent prayers, which He said the Father rewarded most.

The Church, too, has its battle with conscience. "When I am in heaviness I will *think* upon God." When anxious fears tumble over one another ; when the heart is weighed down; distress has come, as it usually does, from an unexpected quarter; things have gone wrong; the sorrowful heart prefers to be alone, silent, to pour out its supplication to God. Thus it finds new strength in the promise, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." (Isa. 41:10.) Silent times of meditation in the night watches, when sleep eludes us, can be of benefit. The *rest* of faith more than compensates for loss of physical rest.

Job's comforters came to console their hard-hit friend. When it came to the test all they could do was sit and lament in silence. For seven days and nights not a word was spoken. The sympathy of silence—where words are out of place.

Silence could also be to our loss. It has been stated that World War 1 would never have begun had Germany been aware of England's intentions at the invasion of Belgium. Again, before World War 2, Hitler, unable to appreciate the lessons of history, where understanding should have guided reason, history's silence provoked a rash course that affected millions. It happens everywhere: Jesus was silent on many things dear to Him that He would have liked to share with His disciples. He said, "I have many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them now." It is only the prepared heart that can appreciate the deepest and best things of God.

How many people are there, like the nameless woman of Canaan, who see in Jesus the Saviour and cry to

Him for help, only to find, like she did, their prayers unanswered? “He answered her not a word.” Who was she? Silence. She acknowledged Jesus Lord, Son of David, so must have had some connection with Israel. She could have been a proselyte, but indifferent to her new responsibilities. Foolish people returning to folly of unseemly conduct were likened to “dogs.” (Prov. 26:11 ; 2 Pet. 2:22.) In view of her insistent plea and utter abnegation of self, this apparent folly must have ensnared her in such a subtle, deceptive way that she had no excuse for her present unworthy state—if she were a “dog” it was not because she was pleased with that state; if no “meat” was available the “crumbs” of grace would suffice. Jesus utterly ignored her. “He answered her not a word.” When at last the despairing silence was broken it surely must have dashed to pieces any flimsy hope. But maybe there are some, like the unnamed woman, that silence from on High only draws closer; humbled into complete submission they find there never was any lack of love on Jesus’ part. It is our attitude that shuts out grace, knowledge and wisdom. Adjust that attitude and streams of grace flow our way. But *presume* on that grace, one will find the Father’s face turned from us; we shall be left to wallow in the mire of our own foolish desires.

For those merely curious, questions gendered by busybodying, like, “Are there few that be saved?” “What shall this man do?” find little response, and in the main go unanswered—silence. Questions asked merely to provoke, to trip another, or availed as a means to show superior knowledge, either rebound or go unanswered—“Neither will I answer ye.” Provocative discussions or questions are best met with silence. (Amos 5:13.)

Oppressed, afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth—silent—by design. Before Pilate, the governor marvelled at His silence. Whilst Jesus remained silent, Pilate, unprejudiced by any word from Jesus, and finding no fault in Him, had a duty to discharge. He failed that duty. “As a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” Before Herod, “that fox,” He was also silent. What good purpose could be served by trying to reason with a “fox”?

Later that same day, in marked contrast with the silence and serenity of Jesus, there was confusion, strife, anger, hatred, envy, and every other evil attribute venomously voicing itself against the unspotted Lamb of God. The forces of Nature seemed to cry out against the outrage. The winds of heaven furiously lashed the dust of the earth; the sun was darkened, and the earth quaked. “I was dumb with silence; I held my peace, even from good, and my sorrow was stirred.” During this clamour and commotion Jesus entered a silent time, so dark, so foreboding, so deep, unlike anything ever before experienced, so utterly indescribable, that it broke His heart. He cried in anguish, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Many of our hymns sing praises of God’s glory. Aeons ago Creation also began its hymn of praise, “when the morning stars sang together.” Nature’s hymn is silent, but has a melody that haunts every intelligent being.

It is written, “God *spake* unto the fathers in divers manners.” One of these divers manners was, and is, through Nature, especially the heavens and firmament of earth. “The heavens are telling the glory of God, day to day pours forth speech” as each day tells to its successor a sublime poem of glory, law and order. One translation amplifying Nature’s silent hymn of praise says, “There is no speech nor are there words; their voice is not heard, but their melody extends throughout the whole earth,” (Psa. 19:1-3.) Although this marvellous hymn is enwrapped in silence, it has a very agreeable harmony for mankind.

One of the world’s foremost musical composers, Ludwig Beethoven, was stone deaf when he compiled some of his immortal sonatas. The physical ear heard not a sound, but the inner ear heard finer shades of harmony. Beethoven recorded them so that the world could share his joy.

Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Of Moses it is said he endured, as *seeing* Him

who was invisible. Could we say of the faithful during this acceptable time, they endure as *hearing* Him who is inaudible? The convictions of faith are wrought in silence. On the other hand, the pangs of remorse take their toll also in silence.

The growth of a plant, like that of a Christian, is silent. The influences of the Spirit, like the sun's rays, are silent, but powerful. The "still, small voice" plays a major part. After all our efforts, comparable to the "great strong wind that rent the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks" (what a violent, deafening disturbance) ; after the fiery time of trouble that will try every man's work, the "still, small voice" (lit. the "voice of the silence") will exercise a power in our affairs greater than any atomic explosion. The power of the Kingdom, that cometh not with observation, is not like man's kingdoms with all their noisy demonstration, ringing of bells, firing of cannon, etc. (Matt. 12:19.) Voices, thunderings, lightnings with progressive crescendo will call for a silent time, and like Job, during that silence, hear an inaudible voice say, "Be still, and know that I am God."

When God speaks He asks, for our benefit, that there be no interruptions. He wants silence. He does not lift a giant telephone, dial Trunks, and ask for Earth. He asks for silence. If He does not get it He turns His face away and is silent towards us. We may not realise it, but this is a very sad and sorrowful state. It would be living without God. The Psalmist dreaded such a condition : "Keep not thou silence, O God ; hold not thy peace, and be not still." (Psa. 83:1.) Even when God has His face turned in our direction, which is indicative of favour, we find He speaks very slowly, and in short syllables, separated by long intervals of silence. Sometimes it takes years to translate His message, interwoven as it is with our experiences. But at last the full text breaks into our dull understanding. It is "God is Love."

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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.

A cross (x) on the wrapper indicates that the subscription to "Peoples Paper" is overdue.

Convention News

MANY prayers of thanksgiving are offered to the Giver of every good gift for the blessings of His grace so freely bestowed upon His people as they met in Adelaide for the Easter Convention.

True to His promise, as always, God has poured out such a blessing that we find our hearts unable fully to receive and appreciate. So we earnestly pray for grace to help us to enlarge our hearts, to cast out the elements of the self-life, the fleshly mind, which may still be hindering us from a fuller appreciation of the beauty of holiness as manifested in the perfect life of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Nothing less than the absolute and complete surrender of our hearts and wills and all our powers to be used for God's glory can prepare the way to enable us to receive of His fulness of blessing. (See Mal. 3:10.) "That I may *win* Christ,"—"that I may *know* him," writes the great Apostle Paul, expressing his deep longing for the fuller, richer experience and knowledge of Christ, whom to know is eternal life.

The Convention gatherings, as also our weekly meetings in His name, do help us, by God's grace, to know more of the beauties of true holiness. As is customary in matters of this kind, the measure of blessing to be received from our meetings will depend largely upon the degree of our love and zeal with which we prepare our hearts by prayer and careful study in preparation for the actual contact in fellowship with the Lord when He comes to meet us as we meet together in His name. "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together . . . but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching," writes the Apostle.

It was a pleasure to welcome a good number of brethren and sisters from Melbourne and Geelong, Victoria, also a brother from Perth, W.A. We trust that these dear friends who travelled long distances to be present with us may be richly recompensed by the spiritual blessings received, and find their hearts and minds refreshed and encouraged to press on in the narrow way of sacrifice with renewed zeal and the energy of the holy spirit.

It was encouraging to listen to the helpful words of exhortation and instruction given by various brethren in their addresses, the topics of which were as follows :—"Caleb's Faith"; "To Live"; "Consecration and Separation"; "Study to Show Thyself Approved Unto God"; "Signs of the Times"; "God's Forgiveness"; "Should Christians Observe the Sabbath Day —Saturday or Sunday?"; "The Blessed People of God"; "Whom Having Not Seen Ye Love"; "Living Our Faith"; "Silent Times"; and "Blessing the Lord in the Night."

The three Bible Studies were also helpful to us, the portions of Scripture examined being 1 Thes. 4:13-18; Isa. 49:5-13; 2 Cor. 5:14-21. Another interesting feature was the showing of some "Dawn" TV films which were sent to us by a Brother and Sister in Queensland.

The Praise and Testimony meetings were helpful and profitable, giving opportunity for various brethren to speak of the Lord's blessings and mercies in their personal experiences. The "Hymns We Like and Why" session enabled the brethren to testify in song to the praise and goodness of God.

It was a pleasure also to receive messages from various brethren throughout the Commonwealth who could not be with us in person, but whose loving interest in the Convention was shown by their words of Christian love and goodwill and Scriptural greetings. The Scriptural greeting sent by the Convention to the classes and brethren is found in 1 Thes. 3:12, 13, and 1 Thes. 4:15-18.

The Convention closed with the singing of the lovely hymn—"Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in

Christian love”—during which we bade one another Good-bye with the customary handshake, followed by the singing of the well-known hymn, “God be with you till we meet again.” The concluding prayer was of thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father for all blessings received, and asking His protection and guidance upon each heart present, and upon all His dear people in every place.

Convention Notes.

Notes on Adelaide Easter Convention are now available free from this office.

A very good Oxford Bible, with References, India paper, thumb index, Brevier clear type, Persian Morocca binding, is now available at 60/-. Same Bible with Concordance and Subject Index at 70/-.

Memorial Observances

Melbourne.

THE brethren in Melbourne gladly gathered on the anniversary of the institution of the Memorial of our Lord’s death, to honor His request that His disciples should observe this remembrance year by year as they walk in the steps of their Lord. It was a pleasure to have in our midst a number of Polish brethren, some of whom have arrived in Australia in recent months, and others who have been associating with us in fellowship whenever possible for some years past. While the language difference with some of the more recent arrivals did not allow full understanding of our service, yet there was full fellowship in the essential love and devotion to the Lord in keeping His request in spirit and in truth.

. The service of appropriate hymns and prayers of thankfulness to our Heavenly Father for the gift of our dear Saviour, together with Bible readings and an address outlining the important features of the Memorial in type and antitype, prepared our hearts to partake of the emblems representing our Lord’s broken body and shed blood as the “Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” The participation of the Lord’s consecrated people in His sacrifice was fully realised, as pictured also in partaking of the emblems—being broken with Him and yielding their lives “a living sacrifice” in His steps, in expectation of the “drinking anew in the Kingdom” by the grace of God. **Geelong, Vic.**

A small group of Bible students met once again to remember our Lord’s death at the Passover season as requested by Him on that night, when, as the Lamb of God, He fulfilled the antitype and cancelled the Jewish passover type.

Appreciating the primary significance of our justification accomplished in the Memorial observance, as instituted by our Lord when He took bread and wine remaining on the Passover table and said to His disciples, “Do this in remembrance of ME” (in future) ; we sought also to grasp the significance of our communion (association, partnership) with Him as members of His body in the sufferings of the present time, that we may enjoy a further fellowship or association with Him in the resurrection to reign with Him in power and glory.

We endeavored to keep the fact clear that it is not possible to appreciate the Memorial in its full sense if at the same time we are in association with the “table of devils”—teachers of evolution, papacy, spiritism, etc.—which leads men to believe that they can climb up towards perfection some other way than through the vicarious sacrifice of Christ and a full submission of the heart (will, mind) to Him alone in a life of consecration.

Our service consisted of hymns, Bible readings, and an address, after which the emblems were partaken of, and was in the charge of one brother with four others assisting.

Adelaide.

In accordance with our Lord's request that we "Do this in remembrance of Me," the Adelaide friends met to celebrate the Memorial of our Saviour's death. We realise that all our hopes of future life and blessing are dependent upon His perfect sacrifice on our behalf.

After singing hymns appropriate to the occasion, the meaning of the Memorial was outlined by a brother, the Scriptures pertaining to this important event were read, and prayers were offered for the Lord's blessing upon the hearts of all who love the Lord, especially for those who have made a full consecration to be dead with Christ and to walk in His steps.

With thankful, humble hearts we partook of the emblems, praising God for His great mercy in providing the Lamb which taketh away the sin of the world; and earnestly beseeching His grace to enable us to continue to follow in the steps of our Master—to sacrifice the good things of this life that we may attain unto the heavenly inheritance in joint-heirship with our Redeemer.

We look forward to the end of this day of sacrifice, to the time when the Church, the Body of Christ, shall be united with her Lord and Head, the sufferings completed, and the blessings secured by the sacrifice of Christ will go out to all the people for the blessing of all the families of the earth.

Perth.

A little group of 15 celebrated the Lord's Memorial on the 17th of April. Our Lord's instruction, "This do in remembrance of Me," was solemnly carried out with thankful hearts, each appreciating the great sacrifice of their Redeemer who died that we may live.

The emblems partaken of reminded us of our dear Lord's broken body and shed blood which brings life if availed of. Also our Lord's invitation to follow in His steps reminded us of our sacrifice with Him, being "accepted in the beloved." We each renewed our pledge that we would faithfully carry out our "covenant of sacrifice," whilst at the same time being under His precious blood, cleansing us from all sin.

Sydney.

The Sydney celebration of Christ's Memorial was duly observed on the 17th of April. Although comparatively few in number attended, nevertheless the service was very impressive and a stimulus to those present.

The brother who gave the address lucidly emphasized the points: (1) The gauntlet run by the Church as pictured by the type in Egypt when the Passover was inaugurated. (2) The common-union and its implications—"heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ," if so be that we suffer with Him. Surely a bond of sympathy must ensue, and on the principle of "A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind," we will be "To their faults a little blind and to their merits very kind." **Tasmania.**

Three of us assembled to partake of the Memorial of Christ's death, in which we gave thanks for the wonderful privilege of partaking in our Lord's sufferings and our pledge to be dead with Him. We were truly blessed in obeying our Lord's instruction, "Do this in remembrance of me."

From two of our brethren in Queensland the following was received :—We had the privilege of partaking

of the Memorial on Tuesday, April 17. We had a tape on the Memorial by Brother Pollock, which is very good and fitted in quite nicely, there being just Sister and myself. We are grateful for the knowledge of what our Lord's death meant to us, and to the world in the future.

An isolated Sister in N.S. Wales also reported so nicely on behalf of herself and another Sister, and which manifests the unity of spirit amongst God's dear people—"I was once more able to share this solemn and searching celebration with my dear Sister in the Lord. At about 7 p.m., I went round to her house where we were able to withdraw into the lounge room. After reading some of the helpful suggestions, once more, from 'The New Creation' we began our little ceremony with Jude's Consecration Hymn.

"We humbly asked the Lord's blessing and acknowledged His dear presence with us as a third member. We

remembered in prayer the brothers and sisters everywhere, and especially those few known to us. We thought of you all gathered in groups here and there, even as we were, remembering His night and day of unspeakable suffering. We felt so close to you all, though so far any, remembering that 'we are all one loaf.' Our hearts went out to the few who must celebrate alone with the Lord, though fully aware that they would be equally blessed.

"We read a moving and lovely discourse on our Saviour's trial and sacrifice, and a short but valuable contribution from 'Peoples Paper.' Asking the Lord's blessing on the emblems we humbly and appreciatively partook of the supper, realising our redemption and our responsibility, our incredible privilege. So without further prayer we terminated our little ceremony and soon parted."

Some Better Thing: "Our Heavenly Calling.

IN the early days of our Christian life there is some difficulty in understanding how to "rightly divide the Word of Truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). We do not comprehend all at once that God's Plan provides, first, a heavenly salvation for the Church, and then an earthly salvation for mankind in general. The study of the Bible along Dispensational lines clears away all our difficulties. It shows us that the promise that the redeemed "shall sit every man under his own vine and fig tree," and "long enjoy the work of his hands" (Mic. 4:4; Isa. 65:22), is God's provision for Israel restored to Divine favour, and for all the families of the earth, but not for the Church. Of the true Church, the Bride of Christ, it is declared that her members shall, in the resurrection, be like unto the angels—heavenly or spirit beings.

St. Paul distinctly says of these, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." (1 Cor. 15:50). Jesus tells these that He has gone to prepare them a place in the Father's house on high. (John 14:2, 3). But the place for man, the earth, already provided from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:34), is a very different one from ours, of which we read, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."—1 Cor. 2:9; Isa. 64:4.

Now we understand why it is that from Genesis to Malachi there is not one suggestion of a heavenly or spiritual hope for any natural man. Every promise is earthly. In Abraham's case, for instance, we read, "The Lord said unto Abram, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward, for all this land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it, and in the breadth of it ; for I will give it unto thee."—Gen. 13:14-17.

St. Paul refers to this difference between the hopes of the spirit-begotten Church, founded at Pentecost, and those of all others. Pointing to the faithful of the past, he declares that although they had God's testimony to their faithfulness, nevertheless, they "received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they, without us, should not be made perfect."—Heb. 11:38-40.

As soon as we get our "better thing," our higher reward of "glory, honor, and immortality," in joint-heirship with our Lord, as figuratively His Bride—then the worthy ones of ancient times will get their reward of resurrection to human perfection. Under Messiah's Kingdom, those perfect men will be "princes in all the earth." (Psa. 45:16). Then from the spiritual to the perfected earthly ones the blessings and instruction will descend for the poor, ignorant, selfish and superstitious world to help them, to uplift the obedient to the perfections illustrated in the perfected Worthies.

We have heard of the Sunday School teacher who told her class about heaven, about its pianos, harps, organs, horses and carriages, fruits and flowers, etc. We see that she was merely thinking of the blessings God has provided for the faithful and obedient of the world—"in due time". She had no conception of the "heaven of heavens" promised to the faithful followers of Jesus in the "narrow way." The Great Teacher explains that it is impossible to describe heaven with its beauties and charms. He said to Nicodemus, "If I have told you of earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?"—John 3:12.

In line with this, the Bible makes no attempt to describe heaven itself, nor its inhabitants. We are merely told that "God is a Spirit," "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see"—personally. (John 4:24; 1 Tim. 6:16). Men must discern God in His works—the noblest of which is the perfect man—made in His moral likeness, on the earthly plane, "a little lower than the angels" on the spirit plane. The most that His Word declares of our heavenly inheritance is that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."—1 Cor. 2:9.

But while refusing to inform us of the heavenly condition, God gives us a soul-satisfying portion. Through the Apostle He declares (1 John 3:2), "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He (the glorified Jesus) shall appear (at His second advent, in power and great glory) we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." Others, not thus changed from human to spirit nature by the First Resurrection power, will not "see Him as He is," but only as He shall be revealed in His providences and judgments, which every eye shall recognise.

How satisfactory! Beyond all that we could have asked or thought! "Like Him!"—what more could we ask? "Like Him" whom God hath highly exalted "Far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named!" (Eph. 1:21). We stand amazed at such grace! Moreover, we can realise that He who called us to become "partakers of the divine nature" and joint-heirs with the Redeemer in His Mediatorial Kingdom has provided for our every comfort and joy in that heavenly state, the details of which we may not now grasp. Prophetically of these it is written, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake with Thy likeness."—Psa. 17:15.

It is the hope, the desire, the aim of every one of us to make our calling and election sure—to so run that we may obtain that great "prize" of participation in the First resurrection. Of that resurrection we read, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the First (chief) Resurrection; on such the Second Death hath no power, but they shall be Priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." (Rev. 20:6). Let us have this in mind, that our participation with our Lord in the glories of the Kingdom is dependent upon our faithfulness here in following Him through evil report and through good report; through honour and through dishonour; in the bearing of the cross along the way of self-denial.

