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“Seasons of Refreshing”

“Reform, therefore, and turn, that your sins may be blotted out; so that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.”—Acts 3: 19, Diaglott.

THE opening verses of the third chapter of Acts give us a lovely record of the healing of a man lame from birth by the Apostles Peter and John. This miracle made such an outstanding impression upon the people when they saw this man walking and leaping and praising God, for they knew he had been lame previously all his life. In the words of verse 10, “they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.”

From verse 12 we have the words of Peter explaining how this miracle came about, and the logical procedure for those to follow who had brought about the death of Jesus, whose resurrection to the Father’s right hand had been the means of manifesting God’s power in such a remarkable manner as to cure this lame man instantly. The passage reads: “And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you. And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know; yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.” As in our text, verse 19 reads from the Diaglott—”Reform, therefore, and turn, that your sins may be blotted out; so that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” The meaning of the Greek translated “blotted out” is—”to smear out, that is, obliterate.” And the words “from the presence of the Lord”, carry the thought of—”out from the face of, as a mark of favour”—that is from Jehovah, whose favour is indicated by the figure of His face turned towards us.

The question may be asked, When did the Apostles Peter and John expect those to whom they spoke to truly repent and become converted on the basis of faith in the sacrifice of Christ and then be worthy to receive seasons of refreshing from the presence_ of Jehovah? Would it not be there and then? Would not those who truly repented have the opportunity and privilege to become Christians right away? And by walking faithfully in the steps of Christ, have the hope of the heavenly reward? Is not that why the Apostle exhorted them to repent, and has not that been the object of the Gospel being preached all the Gospel Age, to take out a people for God’s name from the world of mankind? It seems obvious that the preaching of the Apostles was to convert those to whom they spoke there and then—Repent and be converted, turn again and have seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. That seems to be the point in the teaching of Peter and John, and the reason for the miracle, to impress upon the people that here were God’s true witnesses.

In the truth literature for many years past it has been usual to link verse 19 of our chapter with verses 20 and 21, making the three verses apply to our Lord’s second advent and “times of restitution of all things” throughout the Millennial Age. Understood that way, the “seasons of refreshing” and “times of restitution” would be the same period, and both would apply to the Kingdom Age. Wouldn’t it be strange if Peter were implying that after true repentance and conversion on the basis of faith in Christ’s sacrifice, those to whom he spoke must wait about 2,000

years to receive seasons of refreshing in the day of the general resurrection, when the times of restitution for the earthly kingdom were operating? It surely would be strange if that were true.

On the other hand, it may be asked why Peter followed verse 19 with the promise that God would send Jesus Christ at His second advent, and there would then be times of restitution of all things. Peter no doubt was following through with the wonderful plan of God. In addition to bestowing seasons of refreshing there and then to those worthy of His blessing, God had a Plan which would ultimately embrace all mankind. It is a well-known fact, too, that when people are feeling after and learning the Truth as we know it, to read of God's plan of times of restitution for all mankind very often is the means of convincing such people that God really loves all the human family. They say, If God has such a gracious plan for the restitution or restoration of mankind from death through the sacrifice of Jesus, we wish to serve God now. We wish to use our lives in the service of such a God. Very often the understanding of restitution clinches in the minds of people that they really wish to serve God now—they are willing to sacrifice for God who so loved the world as to redeem all humanity and give them an opportunity of everlasting life in due time.

Very likely some who heard Peter speak thought the same way about God, and yielded their lives in sacrifice after repentance and conversion, and had their sins forgiven and received seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord for the remainder of their lives on earth, and had good hopes of attaining the heavenly reward by proving faithful unto death.

We believe there is a similar meaning to the passage in Acts 2: 36-39. Here Peter, speaking previously to our text in the third chapter, says—"Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the holy spirit. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Doesn't it seem that the same exhortation of chapter 2 is applicable in chapter 3? Repent and be converted, acknowledge the Lord as the true Saviour, consecrate your life to His service, and seasons of refreshing shall come out from the presence, from the face, of Jehovah.

We ourselves have had refreshing from the presence of the Lord. We have not had to wait for the times of restitution, and -why should those to whom Peter spoke be required to wait 2,000 years for the kingdom age? Those who really repented, even though they crucified the Lord of glory, would be forgiven. And the Apostle declared that it was mainly in ignorance that they put the Lord to death; that would count in their favour and help them to repent and be converted, and they could have God's favour there and then.

We are glad that God's plan works that way. We have received much refreshing since we repented and had forgiveness for sins through faith in the Redeemer, and yielded our lives in His service. Most of us have had similar experience to that described in Eph. 2: 1, 2, 4-6—"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." What a lovely privilege and favour is indicated here for those who really yield their lives to the Lord; and He is merciful to accept them on the basis of faith in Christ, and raise them up to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

The same Greek word for "presence" in Acts 3: 19 is found also in Heb. 9: 24. This is a lovely verse telling us about our Lord's resurrection and ascension to heaven. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." God had given His Son to be the Saviour; He had been faithful unto death, and had ascended into heaven to appear in the presence of God for the Lord's true people. This is the same word "presence" which indicated "out from the presence of the Lord" seasons of refreshing would come to those whom Peter exhorted to repent and be converted.

Aren't we glad that Christ appeared in the presence of God for us, for the "us" class of the Gospel Age! He has not yet appeared for the world of mankind in general. He will appear the second time for all mankind, but now, during the Gospel Age, for us, the children of God. This is the great Plan of God, that He is taking out a people for His name, those who delight to represent the Name above every name, and by proving faithful unto death they may, by the Lord's grace, inherit the heavenly kingdom with Him. Surely we thank God because He has invited us into His family, and our Lord has appeared in the presence of God on our behalf. May we, by the Lord's grace, continue "looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 12: 2.)

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PEOPLES PAPER AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM Australia, 3101.

Convention News

THE Annual Convention arranged by the Melbourne brethren proved a helpful and refreshing season once again over the four days of the Christmas season. We are thankful to the Lord for His blessings throughout the gatherings, and it was a pleasure to welcome visiting friends from interstate and country parts of Victoria, the attendance being quite good throughout the Convention days.

The gatherings consisted of Bible Studies, Fellowship Meetings and addresses by various brethren, and a film screening. The passages for the Bible Studies were—1 Tim. 6: 6-11; 1 Tim. 6: 12-16, and Heb. 12: 22-29. During these studies many helpful lessons for the Christian life were presented, giving encouragement to all in attendance to press on in the privileges and opportunities of discipleship which are very great favours indeed in these last days of the Gospel Age.

Some helpful addresses by the brethren were presented on the following topics—"Perfecting of the Saints"; "The Name Above Every Name"; "Times of Refreshing from the Presence of the Lord"; "Knowledge and Wisdom"; "Not Known After the Flesh"; "Thoughts on Revelation"; "A Light in the Night"; "The Voice of God Down the Ages"; and "A Contrite and Humble Spirit." Notes on these addresses as well as the other sessions of the Convention will appear in the Convention Notes expected to be available shortly.

Messages with greetings and Christian love were received from a number of Classes and brethren throughout Australia, and overseas, and were appreciated by the gathering at the first Fellowship Meeting. Opportunity was also given for personal testimony to the Lord's goodness in appreciation of the blessings received through the truth, and God's overruling providence in the lives of the brethren. The "Hymns We Love and Why" session was also an enjoyable time of praise to the Lord, the Giver of every good and perfect gift. The film screened on the last day of Convention—"The Return of the Exiles"—was disappointing, not being up to expectations as a public witness, but we were glad to compensate to some extent a number of the public who attended by providing a booklet to all who left their names and addresses. The text of Scripture in 1 Tim. 6: 12-14 was sent with Christian greetings from the Convention to all who had sent messages, and to all who love the Lord in every place.

Our Polish brethren in Melbourne were gladly welcomed to the Convention again, though the language difficulty hindered their entering in at all sessions. The Love Feast on the final evening of the Convention, during which the loved hymns, "Blest be the tie that binds", and "God be with you till we meet again", were sung heartily, and the closing prayer of thanksgiving to God and asking His blessing upon all His dear people everywhere, concluded a helpful Melbourne Convention for 1969.

Commentator on Hebrews

THE general design and purpose of the Epistle to the Hebrews is, to preserve those to whom it was sent from the danger of apostasy. Their danger on this subject did not arise so much from persecution, as from the circumstances which were fitted to attract them again to the Jewish religion. The temple was still standing. The morning and evening sacrifice was still being offered. The splendid rites of that imposing religion were yet observed. The authority of the law was undisputed. Moses was a lawgiver, sent from God, and no one doubted that the Jewish form of religion had been instituted by their fathers in conformity with the divine direction. Their religion had been founded amidst remarkable manifestations of the Deity—in flames, and smoke, and thunder; it had been communicated by the ministration of angels; it had on its side and in its favour all the venerableness and sanction of a remote antiquity; it commended itself by the pomp of its ritual, and by the splendour of its ceremonies. On the other hand, the new form of religion had little or nothing of this to commend it. It was of recent origin. It was founded by the Man of Nazareth, who had been trained up in their own land, who had been a carpenter, and who had had no extraordinary advantages of education. Its rites were few and simple. It had no splendid temple service; it had none of the pomp and pageantry, the music and the magnificence of the ancient religion. It had no splendid array of priests in gorgeous vestments, and it had not been imparted by the ministry of angels. Fishermen

were its ministers; and by the body of the nation it was regarded as a schism, or heresy, that enlisted in its favour only the most humble and lowly of the people.

In these circumstances, how natural was it for the enemies of the gospel in Judea to contrast the two forms of religion, and how keenly would Christians there feel it! All that was said of the antiquity and the divine origin of the Jewish religion, they knew and admitted; all that was said of its splendour and magnificence they saw, and all that was said of the humble origin of their own religion they were constrained to admit also. Their danger was not mainly that which arises from persecution. It was that of being affected by considerations like these, of relapsing again into the religion of their fathers, and of apostatizing from the gospel; and it was a danger which beset no other part of the Christian world.

To meet and counteract this danger was the design of this epistle. Accordingly the writer contrasts the two religions in all the great points on which the minds of the Christians in Judea would be likely to be affected, and shows the superiority of the Christian religion over the Jewish in every respect, and especially in the points that had so much attracted their attention, and affected their hearts.

He begins by showing that the Author of the Christian religion was superior in rank to any and all who had ever delivered the Word of God to man. He was superior to the prophets, and even to the angels. He was over all things, and all things were subject to Him. There was, therefore, a special reason why they should listen to Him, and obey His commands, chapters 1 and 2. He was superior to Moses, the great Jewish lawgiver, whom they venerated so much, and on whom they so much prided themselves, chapter 3. Having shown that the Great Founder of the Christian religion was superior to the prophets, to Moses, and to the angels, the writer proceeds to show that the Christian religion was characterized by having a High Priest superior to that of the Jews, and of whom the Jewish high priest was but a type and emblem. He shows that all the rites of the ancient religion, splendid as they were, were also but types, and were to vanish away—for they had had their fulfilment in the realities of the Christian faith. He shows that the Christian's High Priest derived His origin and His rank from a more venerable antiquity than the Jewish high priest did—He was typified by Melchisedec, who lived long before Aaron; and that He had far superior dignity, from the fact that He had entered into the Holy of Holies in heaven. The Jewish high priest entered once a year into the most holy place in the temple; the Great High Priest of the Christian faith had entered into the Most Holy place—of which the former was but the type and emblem—into heaven. In short, whatever there was of dignity and honour in the Jewish faith had more than its counterpart in the Christian religion; and while the Christian religion was permanent, that was fading. The rites of the Jewish system, magnificent as they were, were designed to be temporary. They were mere types and shadows of things to come. They had their fulfilment in Christianity. Christianity was the substance of what in the temple service was type and shadow. By considerations such as these the author of this epistle endeavours to preserve them from apostacy. Why should they go back? Why go back from the substance to the shadow? Why turn away from the true sacrifice to the type and emblem? Why linger around the earthly tabernacle, and contemplate the high priest there, while they had a more perfect and glorious High Priest, who had entered into the heavens? And why should they turn away from the only perfect sacrifice—the great offering made for transgression—and go back to the typical sacrifices of animals which were to be renewed day by day? And why forsake the system that was to endure for ever—for that which was soon to vanish away? The author of this epistle is very careful to assure them that if they now rejected the sacrifice of the Son of God, there was no other sacrifice for sin. It was God's great provision for the satisfaction and cancellation of the guilt of mankind. It was not to be repeated. If that were rejected there was no other. The Jewish rites were soon to pass away; they could not cleanse the conscience from sin. Persecuted, then, though they might be—reviled, ridiculed, opposed—yet they should not abandon their Christian hope, for it was their all; they should not neglect Him who spoke from heaven, for in dignity, rank, and authority He far surpassed all who in former times had made known the will of God to man.

A Light in the Night

(Convention Address)

(John 9: 1 -7; Psa. 12: 1, 2.)

WE have often heard the phrase quoted which forms a part of John 9: 4, “the night cometh when no man can work”, and in this day we often wonder if it is not all but upon us. In a sense it is probably true that a “night” comes in the experience of many individual Christians. As an example, one Bible commentator who wrote extensively during a long life time, had to lay down his pen before his aim to comment upon every book in the Bible was finished, because of near blindness. For many other Christians a long life of service has ended in a “night

time”, because failing health or other circumstances cut short their activities.

The portion of Scripture in John 9: 1-7 reveals an occasion during the earthly ministry of Jesus when He was brought face to face with a calamity—a man born blind. He was not the only such poor unfortunate in the world; there were many like him, and Jesus knew that. While Jesus was destined to be the Saviour of the world with power to ultimately correct all such calamity, He knew the hour of deliverance was not yet—a “night” was even now bearing down upon His soul. But while He remained midst earth’s sorrows He was still a “light” in the darkness, and it was His privilege to witness to what He would one day do—to wipe away of sin each trace.” Jesus explained clearly that this man had not sinned more than other men. His affliction afforded Jesus the opportunity to show what He will ultimately do for all men in due time—in the times of restitution of all things, when His kingdom shall be established.

The death of Jesus by crucifixion truly put out the world’s great light, and it seemed that nature itself testified to it in the quaking earth and rending rocks immediately following (Matt. 27: 51), though even in that commotion the rending in twain from the top to the bottom of the veil of the temple heralded a coming blessing.

Ever since the death of Jesus earth’s “night time” of weeping has continued unabated; any slight alleviation which has been afforded has been through the ministry of Jesus’ representatives in the earth declaring the true gospel. As long as Jesus was in the world He was the light of the world, a light which shone in the darkness, and which the darkness could not overcome until such time in the Father’s plan when Jesus should voluntarily give Himself up as “a ransom for all.” However there has still remained a “light” in the world in the lives of Jesus’ true followers who in Matt 5: 13, 14 are said by our Lord to be the “salt” of the earth, and the “light” of the world.

An interesting point occurs in John 1: 5 where it is said of Jesus “that the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehendeth it not”, according to the Authorized Version. In the margin, and also in other translations in the alternative rendering appears—”and the darkness overcame it not.” The concordance does not bear out this thought convincingly, though it does not by any means rule it out. The Amplified Version gives the marginal rendering first preference and in its usual full expression renders the whole verse—”And the light shines on in the darkness, for the darkness has never overpowered it—put it out, or has not absorbed it, has not appropriated it, and is unreceptive to it.” There is inspiration in the thought that though the darkness has not appropriated or received the “light”, it has not been able to overcome it, to overpower it, or put it out. Even though the day closes and the “night” seems all but upon us, the true followers of Jesus are still a light in the world.

In this connection we may reflect helpfully upon several verses in the 11th and 12th psalms. What is presented on these verses is a result of meditation upon the work of the commentator to whom reference was made earlier, the one whose labours were halted in old age by falling eyesight. As a child of God the Psalmist takes his stand and refuses to quench his “light”—”In the Lord put I my trust”, Psa. 11: 1. This is the reply he gives to certain advisers who try to persuade him otherwise. These advisers caution the man of God—the wicked are bending their bow. The common weapon of war in those days was the bow and arrow. The bow was large and powerful and needed great strength to bend it sufficiently to adjust the string each end. Generally the foot was used, being placed in the centre of the bow to bend it. Not only were they preparing the bow and arrow, but they intended to attack “the upright in heart” stealthily—privily, in darkness, margin. They had no intention of fighting “fair” as we may say, but sought to catch the upright off guard. In verse 3 the adviser further urges the godly man to “give in”—if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? The man of God did not dispute that the foundations, the principles of truth and righteousness were destroyed. The wholesale fraud and violence which had displaced truth and honesty bore testimony to the fact. The “foundation” upon which a good society and social order could rest was gone; what good therefore could the man of God do. Said the adviser, the best thing you can do is flee for your life. Flee as a bird to your mountain, or as another puts it, “fly to the mountains as swiftly as a bird flies from danger.” In other words, drop your high ideals and conform to the new concept of life around you, or you will surely suffer the consequences; the opponents of truth and righteousness will see to it that you are silenced. The reply of the godly man was—”In the Lord put I my trust . . . the Lord is in his holy temple . . . his eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men.” His attitude was, as the later verses of the psalm show, that the Lord would ultimately vindicate the stand for righteousness he was taking, and put down all wickedness.

The Psalmist, however, despite his faith, was utterly conscious of his present position, and that is shown in the early verses of Psa. 12—”Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children -of-men.” Prior to this he had some companions likewise resolved to hold truth and righteousness, but now, more and more, he was finding himself left alone. He had battled on in company with others against the ungodliness and unrighteousness that has always been prevalent in the world, but now (and this was testing his faith and resolve) the faithful fail from among the children of men. Those who had previously professed to be the people of

God and to love righteousness were now relaxing their influence to discourage the general prevalence of wickedness. Because iniquity abounded, the love of the many for righteousness and truth waxed cold. Godly men failed, grew fewer, not through death, but by giving way to the general speaking of vanity, falsehood and flattery. The commentator says—“When men professing religion become conformed to the world—when they live like other men—when they cease to exert an influence for godliness . . . it is time to call on God with special earnestness for His aid.” Rom. 12: 2, Phillips’ translation reads—“Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God remould your minds from within.”

Psa. 12: 2—“They speak vanity every one with his neighbour”—the topics of conversation had no reality. Do we not find that today when people gather and converse together? Little confidence can be placed on anything that is said in relation to trade and business, nor in the political or the religious world. “With flattering lips do they speak and with a double heart.” The Hebrew meaning is—“with lips of smoothness”—language chosen to conceal deception as carefully as possible. With one “heart” they give utterance to words, while the real heart retains a different sentiment.

A passage with similar meaning is found in Deut. 25: 13—“Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small.” The Hebrew word rendered “divers” has similar meaning to “double heart” in Psa. 12: 2. In Deut. it refers to a dishonourable practice of having two weights—one to buy with and another to sell with.

In regard to flattery the commentator says—“Flattery is the ascribing of qualities to another which he is known not to possess, usually with some sinister or base design.” It is not flattery, therefore, to give a word of praise or commendation where deserved, such indeed may often encourage another in a good work. We need to remember that. Real flattery is praise given with an ulterior motive; it is often a guise to win the favour of one who might not condone, or could expose questionable practices of the one offering the flattery.

Psa. 12: 8—“The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.” The commentator remarks on this verse—“The Psalmist sees a state of things existing in which because of the prevalence of iniquity, the wicked seem to go unrestrained; in which no regard is paid to truth; in which falsehood and flattery abound . . . This appears to be the reason in the mind of the Psalmist why the Divine interposition is necessary . . . It is eminently desirable that God should interpose, for the righteous seemed to have failed out of the earth, and the wicked seemed to be wholly in the ascendancy.”

But despite the pressure upon him the Psalmist himself retains his faith in the Lord and His righteousness. Though he should have to stand alone, the Lord would be his trust. He says in Psa. 12: 6—“The words of the Lord are pure words”—not words spoken with a “double heart.” The day would surely come when things would be set right; the oppression of the poor and the sighing of the needy would be brought to an end.

Reflection upon these psalms reveals a condition rapidly increasing in the world of our day. More and more the godly man is failing from among the children of men; greater and greater become the pressures upon those who have resolved to put their trust in the Lord. Verily, who shall be able to stand? Like the Psalmist it is borne in upon us that of ourselves it is an impossible task. “Help Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men.”

Every Christian who can say, That is an untrue or impure doctrine and I refuse to acknowledge it; that is a dishonest practice and I refuse to run my business on that line; fashion or no fashion, that is unbecoming attire and I refuse to wear it; or anything else similarly resisting the present trend of wickedness, is still a “light” in the darkness. The

Christian’s witness, or the “letting our light shine” in this day is meagre beside the “light of men” of which Jesus spoke—that of Christ Himself. However, despite the weaknesses of our own flesh and the imperfection with which our light shines, it can be acceptable to God through grace in Christ, and an effective “witness” still to men. To show people how to live a Christian life is a better witness even than telling them about it.

The brighter the light shines the greater opposition it arouses, for the time is not yet when men will turn from wickedness to righteousness. Darkness still covers the earth and gross darkness the people, and though the night when no man may work could soon be upon us, with God’s help we must keep the light shining, though it be diminutive as a night light. One is reminded of the Sankey hymn sung so often in childhood. The words have meaning now

“Jesus bids us shine with a clear pure light,

Like a little candle burning in the night;

In this world of darkness we must shine—

You in your small corner, and I in mine.”

Like the Amplified Version of John 1: 5 concerning the light of Christ—though the world does not absorb it, is unreceptive to it, the darkness must not be allowed to overpower it, must never put it out. Help Lord—help us to stand in this evil day, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men. Help us Lord to continue to let the “light” shine and not hide it under a bushel, so that it may continue to glorify our Father in heaven. (Matt. 5: 15, 16.)

They do the least,
Who talk the most,
Whose good designs
Are all their boast;
Let words be few.

They do the most
Whose lives possess
The sterling stamp
Of righteousness;
For deeds are true.

Passover Memorial 1970

The anniversary of the Memorial of Christ's death falls this year on the evening of Sunday, 19th April. It is the privilege of the Lord's people to observe this memorial at this season "In remembrance of Christ."

Memorial Services

Melbourne—Sunday, 19th April, at 6.30 p.m., at Masonic Hall, 254 Swan Street, Richmond.

Adelaide—Sunday, 19th April, at 6.15 p.m., at Manchester Unity Building (2nd Floor), 16 Franklin Street, Adelaide.

“MOST HOLY FAITH”

Any of our friends having a copy of “Most Holy Faith” not being used and are willing to dispose of it are asked to communicate with this office, stating the price desired.

BIBLE STUDENTS MANUAL.

Copies of these Manuals, otherwise known as Berean Comments, have been published recently by brethren in Chicago, and are now in stock for the benefit of our friends. With nice appearance, bound in strong cloth, with gold lettering, the price is \$4.00, plus postage.

“Who Only Hath Immortality”

Question: How should we understand 1 Tim. 6: 14-16? Is it the Father or the Son who is referred to as the “King of kings and Lord of lords who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto”, etc.?

Answer: We understand that the Apostle here refers to our Lord Jesus. Our reasons for so concluding are as follows:

(1) While immortality belongs exclusively to the divine nature, we are to remember that the Apostle Paul declares that the entire church is called to “glory, honour and immortality”, and the Apostle Peter says that God has given us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these “we might become partakers of the divine nature.” This implies, therefore, that the church of God is to possess this divine attribute of immortality or death-

lessness. But only our Lord Jesus had yet been made partaker of this quality at the time of the Apostle's writing. The church, His body, would not be thus honoured and glorified until their due time, in the first resurrection, when they shall be like Him, sharing His divine nature, glory, honour and immortality, etc.

(2) That our Lord Jesus already possessed this divine nature, and therefore possessed immortality at the time of the Apostle's writing, is fully attested by the Scriptures, which assure us that "as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." This describes immortality, for no other condition of life is inherent life; all other conditions are derived or imparted life. The statement here that our Lord will give this same inherent life to His followers, is in agreement with the Apostle's assurance that all who have part in the first resurrection are raised in incorruption, in immortality (1 Cor. 15: 52, 53); and remember that our Lord's resurrection was the beginning of this first resurrection, and that it could have meant no less to Him, the Head, than it is by and by to signify to the members of His body. We are to remember the same Apostle's declaration that our Lord Jesus' resurrection was as a "first-fruits"; that thus He became the "first-born among many brethren." We are to remember also that the Apostle, in harmony with the above, expressed the desire that he might have a share in "his resurrection", "the resurrection", "the first resurrection", in which all the overcomers are to share—Phil. 3: 10, 11; 1 Cor. 15: 20; James 1: 18.

If, therefore, sharing in "his resurrection" is to bring His faithful members to immortality, our Lord's own resurrection can have been to no inferior condition. Hence, to apply the text in question to the heavenly Father would not be consistent with the testimony of Scripture, that the heavenly Son possessed immortality at the time as well as the heavenly Father.

(1) That the passage in question relates to our Lord Jesus and designates Him the only Potentate, King and Lord, does not imply any disregard or disrespect of the heavenly Father and His attributes, kingship, etc., as the same writer (St. Paul) elsewhere points out. When speaking in similar strain about Christ's kingdom and the subjugation of all things under Him, he says, "It is manifest that he is excepted who did put all things under him." In other words, comparisons which show dignity and honour pertaining to Christ, Head or body, are never understood to be comparisons with Jehovah, who is beyond all comparison—see 1 Cor. 15: 27, 28.

The correctness of this application is further attested by our Lord's own application to Himself of the same titles—see Rev. 17: 14 and 19: 16.

The Apostle's entire discourse is along the line of showing the faithfulness of our Lord Jesus, His humility and high exaltation, and how servants and all of us should be likewise humble and lowly and faithful to the truth as servants of God, and in due time be exalted—manifested to the world—in glory, honour and immortality in the kingdom.—"Reprints" 2747.

Life's Empty Victories

The following article was written by a regular contributor to a secular newspaper in U.S.A., in 1932. It has been published more than once by the Herald of Christ's Kingdom" to whom acknowledgement is made in reproducing at this time.

AS a man grows older, yet has not reached extreme old age, when, presumably, all his past is mellowed and softened in the pleasant, tranquil light of sunset and both mistakes and right acts are equally overspread by the thought that nothing has mattered much, since the whole thing will be soon over; when he arrives at the stage of life's journey where he reviews the past, not alone for the gentle pleasure of reminiscence, but also to seek guidance for his remaining future, and while he still imagines that it is possible for him to mould his character into the secret ideal which he has all along vainly struggled to perfect, there comes, at least to the man of average temperament, in this pause to review, this moment of rest before he completes his destiny, the thought of how much happier, and better and altogether pleasanter his life might have been had he avoided as he might easily have done, certain complications and conflicts which, at the time, seemed to him mightily important.

When they occurred, he was absolutely certain that the triumph of his opinion was a matter of tremendous consequence; it was essential that he should override the opposition and impress upon his opponent that pre-eminent truth and right of his position; and he went at him, hard and strong, and in the heat of the controversy, which ripened into a feud and perhaps ended in the permanent estrangement of one who might once have been counted a friend, he said or did things which were hard and bitter, and better left unsaid or undone.

Perhaps he gained his point; beat down his antagonist, and sent him, humbled and mortified from the contest, to nurse his grievance ever after, and nourish to the end of his days a smouldering hate of the man who got the better

of him; or worse, to cherish the feeling that he had been hardly used.

Strange it should be that, in his later years, the outcome does not seem to have been of very great consequence. What remains permanently is the memory of the incident, and a regret that it should have occurred.

Looking back, he realises the exact moment when he might have refrained from pressing his man to the limit, have perhaps sufficiently satisfied his self-respect and vindicated the justness of his contention without sacrificing a possible friend. Probably it would puzzle him now to state exactly what it was all about then, this famous victory, but he remembers it was a great fight and he was in it—and he is sorry.

Not sorry that he stood up stoutly in defence of his positive convictions; no man ever regrets that, but sorry that he should have esteemed it necessary to go to such lengths in pursuit of his ends that it put reconciliation and ultimate restoration of friendship beyond the bounds of the possible. He remembers these incidents with vague discomfort. No matter which of the two was in the wrong, he holds himself responsible for the outcome.

Did he convince the other of his error? Scarcely. “He that complies against his will is of his own opinion still.” Did the encounter seriously contribute to the upbuilding of his own character? Hardly, unless it was desirable to encourage in himself the love of fighting for the fight’s sake. His later calm and deliberate conviction is that it was not worth while, and he grudges the vitality and energy he put into it, which might well have been conserved to later, more mature and far better use.

The thing the man remembers at this particular point in his life with the most satisfaction is not such a fruitless contest, but rather the time when, by conceding a point, by some exercise of forbearance in pressing an advantage, he made a friend of his opponent, although they differed irreconcilably. Touching these other encounters, which at the moment it seemed necessary to win, but which in the end were so barren of real gain, he says, somewhat sorely, “Let them be forgotten and forgiven.”

He recalls with secret gratification not his paltry and vainglorious victories, but his flabby and perhaps sentimental concessions: the small foolish, kindly things that he did, rare enough, he admits, but fruitful in pleasing memories. For, after all, we are men tarred with the same stick; more or less good, bad or indifferent, as the case may be, yet all capable of doing something kind for each other. He draws from his past the lesson of tolerance, for the future that is left to him, and resolves, perhaps vainly, but at least for the moment, sincerely, that henceforth, while he may never falter in defense of a principle, he will try hard to so moderate his attacks upon the other man as to leave no sting past healing.

The assets he counts up with the most satisfaction are the friends he finds about him. What they may expect of him is the animus of his future. He will endeavour to be true to them and to his own convictions, but he will avoid the useless multiplication of enemies. This is his hope, as he takes stock of what lies before him.

Perhaps the writer could offer no suggestion to his readers, touching the form which good resolves, customary at this season of the year, should take, that would be better for ourselves and for the world we live in, than that we will lead kindlier lives; that we will be less sure and less harsh in our judgments; that we will refrain as far as in us lies from giving the other man “a piece of our minds”; that we will leave room for him to be convinced of his error, if he be wrong and we right, not through the might of our pounding, but rather through the gradual change in his own convictions; that we will finally try to proceed on the way that we esteem the right and only one with less friction, believing that which is true and right will prevail anyhow, and the surer and swifter if it be not enforced by contention.

In a word, to resolve to make friends, not at the sacrifice of conviction or principle, but by conceding to others the simple right of learning the truth in their own time and in their own way, helped perhaps by our, of course, pre-eminently wise suggestion and example, if truly they be such, but at least not hindered by our overemphatic dictum.

Adelaide Easter Convention

The Adelaide brethren are arranging for their Easter Convention this year from Good Friday to Easter Monday (D.V.), in Manchester Unity Building (2nd Floor), 16 Franklin Street, Adelaide. Further information from the secretary—Mrs. R. Jordan, 14 Newark Road, Torrens Park, South Australia, 5062.