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Good Tidings-Great Joy-To All People

(Luke 2:1-20)

THE message of the angels to the shepherds on Bethlehem's plains sounds more and more precious to each child of God in proportion as he grows in grace and knowledge. As his eyes and ears of understanding open more widely to the lengths and breadths of God's great plan of the ages, that prophetic message is the more highly esteemed as an epitome of the entire Gospel. Nor can our attention be too frequently called to the great event which lies at the foundation of that message— our Saviour's birth.

For four thousand years and more the promises of God, clothed in more or less of obscurity, had been given to mankind, intimating that ultimately the great curse of sin and death which had come upon the world through Adam's disobedience in Eden would be rolled away, and instead of a curse, a blight, would come a blessing of the Lord with life-giving refreshment. In various types, figures and shadowy promises this lesson had come down through the ages to the time of our Lord's birth, especially amongst the Jews, who were the divinely favored and covenanted people. And since the Jews were of a commercial spirit, many of them were to be found in all parts of the civilized world; and thus amongst every people the faith in the one God and the hope of Israel through a Messiah were more or less made known, so that at the time of our Lord's birth, we read, "All men were in expectation" of a soon-coming Messiah. Doubtless, this expectation was built upon the interpretation of Daniel's prophecy, which we now see clearly marked the year of our Lord's majority, when He was thirty years of age and made His consecration' to His work and received the begetting of the holy spirit, His anointing as the great antitypical High Priest and as the great antitypical King over Israel and the world.

The Angels and the Shepherds

Noble shepherds those must have been to whom the Almighty sent the angelic message respecting the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, which has rung down the ages and reached our ears—the message which thrills us the more in proportion as we are able to grasp its meaning. First a single angel appeared to the shepherds and allayed their fears saying,

"Fear not; behold I bring you good tidings." It would appear that fear is one of the dominating impulses of the human mind, especially in conjunction with any revelations from the Lord. Men realize—even the

best of the race—that they are imperfect and that the Almighty and His laws are perfect. Instinctively the world seems to realize that a curse or condemnation of the Almighty rests upon it, and instinctively it fears a further curse and further condemnation, realizing its continual and increasing sinfulness. The same is true today with all except the comparatively few who are well informed respecting the divine character and plan. Thus the subject of religion is generally obnoxious to the world in general—a subject which they prefer to avoid, because of a feeling of guilt and a dread of further knowledge and condemnation.

It is for the true children of God today, as it was for the angels at that time, to assure the world that God is better than all their fears—that God so loved the world as to redeem them from the just sentence of death, the curse that came upon all as inheritors of Adam's imperfections and sentence.

“Good tidings” is another translation of our word “gospel.” How beautiful the thought that the Gospel is really and truly good tidings. Alas, for the misrepresentations of God's plan, under which so many of His professed people misrepresent His character and His Word, and apply the term “Gospel” to their various messages from the dark ages, teaching purgatory and eternal torment as the portion of the race. Let us get away from this false thought and get the truth that the Gospel is good tidings. The angel elaborated, saying that his message was good tidings of great joy, which should be unto all people. Ah, thank God, His plan is wider and deeper and higher and grander than anything we had ever conceived. The Gospel is not merely to be good tidings to the comparatively few that now have ears to hear and eyes to see its beauties, but in God's due time it is to be good tidings of great joy to all people.

As every member of Adam's race shared in his fall and in the curse of death which came upon him as a result, so every member of the race was included in the great redemptive sacrifice which our Lord Jesus offered and which was finished at Calvary. God's plan in Christ, as it is being worked out and shall ultimately be accomplished, will mean great joy for all people, and the tidings of this were given at the very moment of our Lord's birth, because He was the one through whom all the glorious things of the divine purpose and plan shall ultimately be accomplished.

Although over nineteen centuries have rolled away since that angelic message was delivered, it has not yet been fulfilled except in a limited measure by faith to those who have the eye of faith and the ears of faith, in all a “little flock.” But the tidings of great misery for nearly all people has been spread abroad in the name of Christ, much to the discredit of the divine plan and to the dishonor of the divine character. Instead of carrying joy the message has very generally carried grief and sorrow, especially to the kind-hearted and more generously disposed. Indeed we may say that no message of the Lord Jesus either true or false, has ever reached all people. Even today, after nineteen centuries of propaganda, only a comparatively small portion of the human family has ever heard of the only name given under heaven and amongst men whereby we must be saved—“nor is there salvation in any other.”—Acts 4:12.

What, then, shall we say of the salvation which is come to those who have truly accepted Christ as their Saviour, and who are today rejoicing in Him as such, and who by faith are seeing the salvation of God begun in their own hearts and yet to be fully accomplished under the whole heavens? This the Apostle calls the salvation by hope. His words are, “We are saved by hope.” (Rom. 8:24) We are not saved actually; we are still surrounded by sin, pain, sighing, crying and dying; the curse is not yet rolled away. All that the best of the Lord's people have received is salvation by hope, by faith. Yet this anticipation of the future salvation, of the resurrection from the dead, of a participation in the glory, honor and immortality of the divine nature promised to the faithful, is so strong, so clear, that those who possess it are enabled to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, even in the midst of trials and difficulties and weaknesses and unfavorable conditions incident to the curse upon the race.

A Prophecy of Good Things

Yes, the angelic message was a prophecy of good things to be accomplished for the Church, and also for the world during the Millennial Age. The church is to have the first blessing. The first resurrection is to be composed only of the blessed and holy who shall live and reign with Christ during the Millennium, the thousand years in which Satan shall be bound, and when the good influences of truth and righteousness shall enlighten the whole earth. The declaration of the Scripture is that the deliverance of the Church will come first, as the prophet declares, “God will help her early in her morning.”—Psa. 46:5.

But much as we rejoice in the glorious hopes of the Gospel set before us who now see, who now believe, who now rejoice with joy unspeakable, we are glad that the divine mercy and love are of such lengths and breadths and heights and depths as to encompass the whole world of mankind, and to provide a blessing for every member of Adam’s race through Him who loved us and bought us with His precious blood.

It will be during the Millennial Age that this prophecy of the angel will have its fulfilment, and the great Saviour who has already redeemed us by His sacrifice will stand forth as the King, the glorified Messiah, and establish His dominion of righteousness in the world for the blessing and uplifting of every member of the race. In harmony with the words of the Apostle, those will be times of restoration, “times of restitution of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:20, 21.) If the Lord had based the hope of the world upon some works of merit or righteousness of the world’s doing, then indeed we might have feared—indeed the more we know of the world, the less hope we would have. But, on the contrary, the Lord has based the entire proposition for the future blessing not upon our worthiness, but upon the worthiness and sacrifice of His Son—to you is born a life-giver, which is Messiah the Lord,

How it adds to our enjoyment of the coming *age* blessings to know that the trials and difficulties of this present Gospel Age are subject to the divine supervision in the interest of the little flock that is now being gathered in advance from amongst men—the “elect,” the Church. We see how the present trials and difficulties are the chiselings and polishing necessary to our development in the fruits *and* graces of the holy spirit in the character-likeness of God’s dear Son, our Lord, our Hope, our Bridegroom. How joyful the thought that soon the elect number called from the world to be the Bride, the Lamb’s wife, will be completed and enter into her glory. How precious the thought that then they shall be privileged with their Lord and Master to extend the divine favour of blessing and uplift to the world. What higher honor or privilege or blessing could possibly come to any?

It was after the giving of the message of good tidings and great joy by the heavenly one that a host of angels appeared to the shepherds, saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men.” This, too is a prophecy. It is not yet true, but will be fulfilled in every particular in God’s due time, which we believe is now nigh, even at the door. Not yet does God receive glory in the highest, not yet is there peace amongst men. Quite to the contrary. God’s name is blasphemed, not only by those who vulgarly and in ribald jest take the divine name in vain, and not merely by the heathen who worship devils and think they are Gods, but even by Christian people, God’s name is blasphemed every day. For be it known that blasphemy is any dishonorable misrepresentation of another. God be merciful to us, for at some time or other every one of us doubtless has blasphemed the holy name in this manner—by misrepresenting the divine character and divine plan, by picturing the God of love and mercy and justice and truth as the originator, the planner, the perpetuator of the eternal torment of the great mass of His creatures, born in sin and shapen in iniquity, born to sin as the sparks fly upwards.

But the Lord had mercy upon us because we did it ignorantly. And we also should have compassion upon others who still ignorantly misrepresent our God, and our energies should be continually bent to their assistance that the eyes of their understanding might open more widely to perceive the lengths and

breadths and heights and depths and know the love of God which passeth understanding.

Noting that peace on earth and goodwill to men have not followed the Saviour's birth thus far, and not discerning that this is a prophecy of what is to be accomplished during the Millennium, many have been inclined to change the translation of this verse so as to have it read, "On earth peace amongst men, in whom he is well pleased." However by thus changing it, the statement would not be true, for even the Lord's people have no peace on earth. Whatever peace they have is in their hearts, and based upon their faith in the Lord and in the glorious things which He promised. Our Lord Himself and the apostles testified to this, assuring us that whosoever in this present time would live godly should suffer persecution, that a man's foes would be they of his own household, etc. (2 Tim. 3:12; Matt. 10:26.) . Let us not confuse ourselves nor abridge the testimony of the Word, but with the eye of faith look forward to the day of Christ in which all these glorious things shall have their fulfilment, in which peace shall indeed fill the whole earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord; bringing divine favour and rolling away the curse from the entire groaning creation, as pointed out by the Apostle.—Rom. 8:22.

Not even with the inauguration of the Millennium will this prophecy be fulfilled: not until its close, when the human family shall have been lifted by the Kingdom regulations out of sin, sickness, pain, sorrow and death up, to all that was lost in Adam—not until then will there indeed be glory to God in the highest, not until then will there be a peace amongst men_ Nor are we to understand that the entire race will be appreciative of the divine love and favor even after they have fully seen the righteousness of God manifested in Christ. On the contrary the Scriptures seem to clearly teach that there will be a class who will then prove unfit for life eternal, unappreciative of the divine favor and we learn that all such shall be utterly destroyed from amongst the people in the second death. Thus eventually by the close of the Millennium, Satan and all wilful wrongdoers having been destroyed, the time will come as declared in the Scriptures when all voices in heaven and in earth and under the earth shall be heard praising God, Him that sitteth upon the throne, and the Lamb forever and ever. Hosanna! Glory to God in the highest! Peace and goodwill to men, will be the final shout of a redeemed race when the great salvation shall have been fully outworked according to the divine plan set forth in the Scriptures.

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Fellowship in the Truth

It is always a pleasure for the Lord's people to associate with others who are also rejoicing in the truths of God's Word, and it is apparent that the fellowship of kindred minds is one of the means the Lord has used to encourage and build up the members of His family all down the Gospel Age, and we may say He is especially using in these last days—during the harvest of the age.

While there are some who almost discount the possibility of new friends becoming interested in the wonderful Divine Plan of the Ages and consecrating their lives to the Lord's service in these days, it is evident that such an outlook is not scriptural and is far from being healthy spiritually. Those with this trend of mind may be elderly, either actually or in mental outlook, and, perhaps weary themselves, are apt to conclude that everyone else is weary as respects spiritual things.. Having this attitude of mind many opportunities of service are lost, being overlooked. Others may conclude that as there are few appreciating the Bible truths in their particular restricted locality the same must be true over wider areas. Yes, it is possible for some to almost wish to terminate the Lord's work of the harvest, which could result in the grieving of the spirit in their hearts and prove a great hindrance to progress in making their calling and election sure.

Truly, activity in the service of the Lord has always been required both as respects one's own spiritual life and service towards others, and, will continue to be required of the follow of the Master in all the days ahead. Ho-, refreshing, indeed, it is to associate with those who, whether advancing in years or otherwise, are fully alert to the privileges and joys of serving the Lord through the brethren or newly interested friends, and do so with praise and thankfulness to the Lord.

Such an opportunity to associate with various brethren, also with a nice number of new friends who have been contacted through the radio stations in Sydney and Brisbane over recent years was possible last month when a three week's visit was paid to the two northern States. Having corresponded regularly for some time with most of those visited, it was a great joy to meet them personally, and to note how the truths of God's Word are held in sincere appreciation and thankfulness to the Giver of every good thing. When our brethren realise that our new friends are the comparative few from the hundreds of enquiries received from the radio witness, they will understand readily that this is just what to expect in the harvest of the age, and rejoice the more with those whom the Lord has drawn and called into the fellowship of His dear Son, through His Word of truth.

During the first week, after renewing happy acquaintance with some of the brethren in the Sydney area, a visit was made to the country where a helpful weekend was spent in fellowship with those who are appreciating so well the glad message of truth with the assistance of the volumes and periodicals etc. It was at this time that one member, having made full consecration to the Lord, joyfully took the symbol of water baptism, thus indicating the heart's desire to be faithful in death baptism in the steps of Christ. We truly rejoice with this dear member who has joined the family of God whose supreme object in life is to fulfil the vows of consecration by the Lord's grace.

Returning from the country of New South Wales, on the way it was a pleasure to greet again two elderly brethren who have been rejoicing in the truth for many years, and continue to do so in hope of the kingdom at hand. While rather frail in the flesh, it was good to realise that the spiritual life was very real indeed with these dear brethren.

Following visits to interested radio listeners, the journey to Queensland was taken, and it was a great pleasure to fellowship with those who have been in the truth for many years. For two days a number of contacts were made with others who have appreciated the message over the air and through the literature

supplied; it is hoped that the interest was also encouraged further, by the Lord's overruling.

The second weekend was spent in the country of Queensland where a little band of interested friends dwell amidst the sugar-cane, pineapple and banana plantations, and it was a great joy to fellowship with them in their homes for two days, with a meeting arranged in the town on each evening. The various truths were freely discussed, and the zeal and interest manifest was a delight indeed; truly, the first love for the Lord and His truth is very precious, and it was most refreshing to witness the deep appreciation on the part of these friends.

There was further joy with an expressed desire on the part of another friend to take the symbol of water immersion, thus symbolizing full consecration to the Lord, and we rejoice with this dear member also in the privilege of responding to the invitation to sacrifice with Christ, so that there may be the great favor of living with Him in the glorious kingdom to come.

Various contacts were made on the way south and in the Brisbane area, and those already interested were encouraged to continue in appreciation of the only message which gives real satisfaction to both heart and mind. It was a pleasure also to visit two other brethren in the country again, and to enjoy their hospitality and fellowship in the truth, while at the same time being taken to view some of the most extensive mountain scenery to be found in Australia.

The journey south was continued in good time to allow the third weekend to be spent with the friends in the Sydney area, and to visit again some unable to leave their homes. There was good fellowship with the brethren at the meeting, and in the homes, and in the remaining few days there was further encouragement to find other interested friends who are really alert and in earnest about the Bible truths. Truly it is most refreshing to realise how the message of truth lightens up the faces of those who are making it their own, as they feast upon its treasures of goodness, mercy, hope and salvation through Christ, not only for the church at this acceptable time for the heavenly kingdom, but also for all mankind who will be granted the opportunity of gaining the earthly kingdom by obedience to the laws then operating throughout the world.

Much assistance was freely given by a number of the friends as we journeyed along, all of which was very much appreciated as from the Lord's hand. Looking back upon the happy season of conversing together on the truths of the Bible with numerous friends, we lift up our heart in thankfulness to the Lord for the privilege enjoyed of partaking and sharing in His good treasures from His Word of truth. May the blessing of the Lord continue with all *His* dear people who look to Him and desire the indwelling of His spirit to guide and *sustain* in all the days ahead, to His praise. **Booklet for January's "Peoples Paper"**

It is expected that a booklet will take the place of the January, 1958, "Peoples Paper," and this will be posted out with the February issue.

Greeting Cards.

One of our brethren in the printing trade has kindly produced some Greeting Cards and sent them along with the request that the proceeds from the sale of them be donated to the General Tract Fund to assist in the work of the Institute. This is very much appreciated, in the service of the Lord.

These cards are quite nice and are suitable for general greetings, but they are not Christmas Cards. The price is 3/- per dozen, post paid; orders may be placed by quoting numbers, as follows-

- (1) "Just for To-day,"
- (2) "One Here and There,"
- (3) "How Readest Thou ?,"
- (4) "The New Leaf,"
- (5) "The Best of Wishes—Faith—Hope—Love,"
- (6) "Drop a Pebble in the Water,"
- (7) "My Bible and I,"
- (8) "Love's Victory,"
- (9) "The Touch of the Master's Hand,"
- (10) "Some Worthy Attainments,"
- (11) "Come Unto Me,"
- (12) "Somewhere the Light is Shining,"
- (13) "—The Secret of His Presence."
- (14) "Watching and Praying,"
- (15) "Thus May He Bless and Keep Thee,"
- (16) "Not Seeing, Yet Believing,"
- (17) "Hitherto and Henceforth,"
- (18) "The Lord My Shepherd,"
- (19) "Into' His Marvellous Light,"
- (20) "Right was The Pathway,"
- (21) "This is My Will for Thee."
- (22) "Are Ye Able ?"

Books Available.

- "Most Holy Faith"--£1.
"Tabernacle Shadows"-6/-.
"Daily Heavenly Manna," birthday pages-10/6.
"God's Promises Come True"—£1.
"Emphatic Diaglott" — New Testament —18/-.
"The Book of Books"—Reviewing the Bible as a whole-10/-.
"The Divine Plan of the Ages"—Cloth bound 4/6; paper covers 2/9.
"Our Lord's Great Prophecy"—1/-. "Manner of Christ's Return"-1/-. "Christ's Return"-1/-.
"Some of the Parables"-1/-.
"Hope Beyond the Grave"-1/-.
"God and Reason"-1/.

Melbourne Christmas Convention.

The brethren of the Melbourne Class wish to **announce** that their Annual Christmas Convention will be held this year (D.V.) on December 25th, 26th, 28th and 29th. in the Masonic Hall, 254 Swan Street, Richmond. They extend a cordial invitation to all friends able to attend any or all these gatherings, and further information is obtainable from the Class Secretary—Mr J. B. Hiam, 16 Kennedy Street, South Oakleigh, S.E.13, Victoria.

Unto the pure all things are pure:

“Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unfaithful nothing is pure; but both their minds and conscience are defiled: they profess to have known God, but by their works they renounce him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work worthless.”—Titus 1:15, 16.

NOT sinners, not the worldly, are thus spoken of by the Apostle, but those who have enjoyed the truth, and who have enjoyed at least the first step in heart purification; namely justification, and whose hearts have become defiled through a failure to maintain in them the law of love as the ruling principle. Instead of being filled with love, selfishness, with its defilement, has been received back as the ruling principle of the heart. Such have the spirit of the world, and sometimes exercise it with a much greater degree of animosity than the world exhibits. They are specially ready, as the Apostle intimates, to impugn the conduct and motives of others; being selfish themselves, they attribute selfishness to every one else; being impure themselves, they attribute impurity to others; having lost the spirit of love which thinketh no evil, their hearts rapidly fill up with selfish, envious, uncharitable, ungodly, unkind sentiments, toward those who are true, sincere and noble.

The Apostle suggests of -such that not only their minds become corrupted, but also their consciences, so that they will do evil, speak evil, think evil, and yet their consciences do not reprove them; because their consciences and minds work in harmony, and, as the Scriptures declare, they become blinded, self-deceived. What a terrible condition this is, and how careful all of the Lord's people should be not only to have pure hearts, pure minds, but also to keep their consciences very tender, in close accord with the Word of the Lord. This condition can only be maintained by judging ourselves, and that strictly and frequently, by the standard which God has given us, His law of Love.

“I want the first approach to feel
Of pride or fond desire;
To catch the wandering of my will,
And quench the kindling fire.”

As the Apostle points out, those whose minds become impure, poisoned by ambition or pride or selfishness, the spirit of evil, professing to have known God, are apt to profess as loudly as ever, sometimes, indeed, becoming boastful of how much they know of God, and of His Word and of how wise they are as respects its interpretation. Not by boasting of professions, therefore, can we always judge who are of pure minds and of good consciences and in full harmony with the Lord. Rather by their fruits we shall know them, as the Master said, and by their works, as the Apostle here points out. If any profess to know God, and yet by their works renounce Him, we are fully justified in questioning whether or not they may be self-deceived, whether or not their consciences, as well as their minds, may have become defiled.

To renounce the Lord in our works does not necessarily mean a resort to murder, robbery, licentiousness, etc. It means, rather, in the beginning at least, that from the hitherto good fountain of a cleansed or

renewed heart or will, from which issued purity, truth, sweetness, kindness, encouragement and refreshment for all who drank of its waters, in the home and family and neighbourhood, and amongst the Lord's people, would issue instead bitter waters, producing bitter feelings, watering and nourishing roots of bitterness, stirring up malice, envy, hatred, strife, etc.

No wonder the Apostle says of such that they are abominable! All who have the spirit of the Lord must abominate the spirit of evil, however surprised and grieved they may be to find it issuing from one who previously gave forth sweetness, love, kindness, good works.

As the Master declared, if the professedly sweet fountain send forth bitter waters, we may know that there is something wrong, something defiling in the fountain, and are not to deceive ourselves respecting its waters, and to partake of its bitterness.

Commenting along the same line, the Apostle James declares, "If any man among you seemeth to be religious and bridled not his tongue, that man's religion is vain." Because the tongue is the index of the heart, because "out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh," therefore the unbridled tongue, speaking selfishly, enviously, bitterly, boastfully, slanderously, proves that the heart from whose fulness these overflow is unsanctified, unholy, grievously lacking of the spirit of Christ—hence, whatever religion it may have attained is thus far vain, as that heart is not saved nor in a salvable condition. No wonder the Apostle comments in our text, that such are "disobedient only by disobedience to the law of the New Creation, love, could anyone reach such a condition of heart and conscience defilement after he had been purified through faith in the precious blood, and consecrated to the Lord.

The final statement of our text is that such a one, having lost the spirit of the truth, and having obtained instead a spirit of bitterness, rancour, evil, having a poisoned or defiled mind and conscience, is "to every good work worthless." No matter what work such a one might undertake to do, it would surely be spoiled, because the spirit of evil, the spirit of pride, the spirit of selfishness, the spirit of malice and envy, are so violently in opposition to every feature of righteousness and goodness and truth **and** love, that there can be no peace, no co-operation between them. This reminds us of our Lord's words, to the effect that those who are His people and who have His spirit are "the salt of the earth"—preservative, so long as they have this spirit; but, as He suggests, if the salt lose its saltiness—if the Christian lose those peculiar features of the spirit of Christ which constitute him different from the world, separate from the world, and a preserving quality in the world—if he should lose these, what? He would be worthless as bad salt, "to every good work worthless."—Titus 1:16.

What course should be pursued by those who find themselves possessed of impure minds—minds inclined to surmise evil rather than good, envious minds, selfish, resentful, bitter, unforgiving minds, which love only those who love and flatter them? Is there any hope for these? Would God not utterly reject such?

God is very pitiful, and it was while all were thus "in the very gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity" that He provided for our redemption. There is hope for all such who see their defilement and who desire to be cleansed.

"His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood avails for me."

But true repentance means both contrition and reformation; and for help in the latter we must go to the Great Physician, who alone can cure such moral sickness; and of whom it is written, "Who healeth all thy diseases." All of His sanctified ones, it is safe to say, were at one time more or less diseased thus, and proportionately "worthless" for His service. True, it is worse for those who were once cleansed, if they,

“like the sow, return to the wallowing in the mire” of sin—but still there is hope, if the Good Physician’s medicine be taken persistently the same as at first.

The danger is that the conscience, becoming defiled, will so pervert the judgment that bitterness is esteemed to be sweetness, and envy and malice to be justice and duty, and the “mire” of sin, to be beauty of holiness. Then only is the case practically a hopeless one.

Some of the Good Physician’s Antidotes for Heart Impurity.

The Good Physician has pointed out antidotes for soul-poisoning—medicines, which, if properly taken according to directions will sweeten the bitter heart. Instead of envy it will produce love; instead of malice and hatred and strife, love and concord; instead of evil-speaking and back-biting and scandal-mongering it will produce the love which thinketh no evil and which worketh no ill to his neighbour; which suffereth long and is kind, which vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, which never faileth and which is the spirit of the Lord and the law of the spirit of life in Christ .Jesus. Let us all take these medicines, for they are good, not only for the violently sick, but for the convalescing and the well. The following are some of the prescriptions:

(1) “He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he (the Lord) is pure.”-1 John 3:3.

The hope mentioned is that we have been adopted as sons of God, with the promise that if faithful we shall be like Him and see Him as He is, and share His glory. As our minds and hearts expand with this hope, and we begin to measure its lengths and breadths, its heights and depths, it surely does set before us the Heavenly Father’s love and the Redeemer’s love in rainbow colours, and we more and more love the Father and the Son because they first loved us. The divine form of love becomes more and more our ideal; and as we seek to reciprocate it and to copy it, the cleaning and purifying of our hearts follows: for looking into the perfect law of liberty—love—we become more and more ashamed of all the meannesses and selfishness which the fall brought to us, and once seen in their true light as works of the flesh and of the devil, all anger, malice, wrath, envy, strife, evil-speaking, evil-surmising, backbiting and slander become more and more repulsive to us. And finally when we see that such as to any degree sympathise with these evil qualities are unfit for the kingdom and to every good work worthless, we flee from these evils of the soul as from deadly contagion. Our hearts (wills, intentions) become pure at once, and we set a guard not only upon our lips but also upon our thoughts—that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts may be acceptable to the Lord.

(2) “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.”—Titus 2:14.

We might theorise much and very correctly upon how and when and by whom we were redeemed; but all this would avail little if we forget why we were redeemed. The redemption was not merely a redemption from the power of the grave—it was chiefly “from all iniquity.” And the Lord is not merely seeking a peculiar people, but specially a people peculiarly cleansed, purified. This medicine will surely serve to purge us from iniquity if we are anxious to make our calling and election sure.

(3) “Pursue righteousness, fidelity, love, peace, with all who call upon the Lord with a pure heart.”-2 Tim. 2:22.

We not only need to start right, but also to pursue a right course. We may not follow unrighteousness even for a moment; whatever it may cost, justice and righteousness must be followed. But here a difficulty arises with some: they do not know how to judge righteous judgment. They are too apt to judge according to rumour or appearances, or to accept the judgment of Scribes and Pharisees, as did the

multitude which cried “Crucify Him ! His blood be upon us and upon our children.” Had they followed righteousness they would have seen the Lord’s character in His good works as well as in His wonderful words of life: they would have seen that so far from being a blasphemer, He was “holy, harmless, separate from sinners ;” they would have seen that His accusers were moved by envy and hatred.

It is just as necessary as ever to follow the Lord’s injunction, “Judge righteous judgment,” and whoever neglects it brings down “blood” upon his own head and becomes a sharer in the penalty due to false accusers. For as the Lord was treated, so will His ‘brethren’ be treated. The more pure our hearts the less they will be affected by slanders and back-bitings and evil-speakings, and the more will we realise that those who have bitter hearts from which arise bitter words are impure fountains in which is the gall of bitterness and not the sweetness of love.

Next comes fidelity, that is, faithfulness. The Lord declares His own fidelity or faithfulness, and declares Himself a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. And even the worldly recognise fidelity as a grace, and by such it is often given first place, for many would commit theft or perjury through fidelity to a friend. But notice that God’s Word puts righteousness first. Fidelity, love and peace can only be exercised in harmony with righteousness, but unrighteousness not being proven against a brother our fidelity and love and peace toward him must continue, and indeed must increase in proportion as envy and slander and all the fiery darts of the Adversary assail him “without a cause.” This valuable prescription will help to keep our hearts free from the poison and roots of bitterness which the Adversary keeps busily planting.

Justice is purity of heart—freedom from injustice. Righteousness is purity of heart—freedom from unrighteousness. Love is purity of heart—freedom from selfishness.

(4) “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit (the spirit of the Truth) unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart, fervently.”-1 Pet. 1:22.

This medicine is for those who have used the other prescriptions and gotten clean. It points out that the purity came not merely through hearing the Truth, nor through believing the Truth, but through obeying it. And not merely a formal obedience in outward ceremony and custom, and polished manner, but through obedience to the spirit of Truth—its real import. All this brought you to the point where the love of the “brethren” of Christ was unfeigned, genuine. At first you treated all with courtesy, or at least without impoliteness; but many of them you did not like, much less did you love them; they were poor or shabby, or ignorant, or peculiar. But obeying the spirit of the Truth you recognised that all who trust in the precious blood and are consecrated to the dear Redeemer and seeking to follow His leadings are “brethren,” regardless of race or colour or education or poverty or natural grace. You reached the point where your heart is so free from envy and pride and selfishness, and so full of the spirit of the Master that you can honestly say I love all the “brethren” with a love that is sincere and not at all feigned.

Now having gotten thus far along in the good way, the Lord, through the Apostle, tells us what next — that we may preserve our hearts pure—”See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently (intensely).” Ah, yes, the pure heart must not be forgotten, else it might be but a step from pure love into a snare of the Adversary, carnal love. But the pure love is not to be cold and indifferent; it is to be so warm and so strong that we would be willing to “lay down our lives for the brethren.”-1 John 3:16.

With such a love as this burning in our hearts there will be no room there for any selfish, envious thoughts or words or deeds. Oh, how blessed would all the gatherings of the “brethren” be if such a spirit pervaded all of them! Can we doubt that, if it held sway in one-half or one-third or even one-fourth, it would speedily exercise a gracious influence upon all—for righteousness and fidelity and love and peace, and against every strife, malice, slander and back-biting?

Let all the “brethren” more and more take these medicines which tend to sanctify and prepare us for the Master’s service here and hereafter.