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Communism as Remedy for World's Ills.

THE following thoughts on the above subject THE written many years ago, but as they are of much interest and very timely to-day, the opportunity is taken to present them to our readers.

Communism proposes a social system in which there will be community of goods; in which all property shall be owned in common and operated in the general interest, and all profits from all labour be devoted to the general welfare—"to each according to his needs."

Some features of Communism we could commend, but as a whole it is quite impracticable. Such an arrangement would probably do very well for heaven, where all are perfect, pure and good, and where love reigns, but a moment's reflection should prove to any man of judgment and experience that in the present condition of men's hearts such a scheme is thoroughly impracticable. The tendency would be to make drones of all. We would soon have a competition as to who could do the least and the worst work; and society would soon lapse into barbarism and immorality, tending to the rapid extinction of the race.

But some fancy that Communism is taught in the Bible and that consequently it must be the true remedy—God's remedy. With many this is the strongest argument in its favour. The supposition that it was instituted by our Lord and the Apostles, and that it should have continued to be the rule and practice of Christians since, is very common. The following is presented in explanation.

"They Had All Things In Common."

"And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people.—Acts 2:44-47.

Such was the spontaneous sentiment of the early Church: selfishness gave place to love and general interest. Blessed experience! And without doubt a similar sentiment, more or less clearly defined, comes to the hearts of all who are truly converted. When first we got a realising sense of God's love and salvation, when we gave ourselves completely to the Lord and realized His gifts to us, which pertain not only to the life that now is, but also to that which is to come—we felt an exuberance of joy, which found in every fellow-pilgrim toward the heavenly Canaan a brother or a sister in whom we trusted as related to the Lord and having His spirit; and we were disposed to deal with them all as we would with the Lord, and to share with them our all, as we would share all with our Redeemer. And in many instances it was by a rude shock that we were awakened to the fact that neither we nor others are perfect in the flesh; and that no matter how much of the Master's spirit His people now possess, they "have this treasure in earthen vessels" of human frailty and defection.

Then we learned, not only that the weaknesses of the flesh of other men had to be taken into account, but that our own weaknesses of the flesh needed constant guarding. We found that whilst all had shared Adam's fall, all had not fallen alike, or in exactly the same particulars. All have fallen from God's likeness and spirit of love, to Satan's likeness and spirit of selfishness; and as love has diversities of operations, so has selfishness. Consequently, selfishness working in one has wrought a desire for ease, sloth, indolence; in another it produced energy, labour for the pleasures of this life, self-gratification, etc.

Among those actively selfish some take self-gratification in amassing a fortune, and having it said, He is wealthy; others gratify their selfishness by seeking honour of men; others in dress, others in travel, others in debauchery and the lowest and meanest forms of selfishness.

Each one begotten to the new life in Christ, with its new spirit of love, finds a conflict begun, fightings within and without; for the new spirit wars with whatever form of selfishness or depravity formerly had control of us. The “new mind of Christ,” whose principles are justice and love, asserts itself; and reminds the will that it has assented to and covenanted to this change. The desires of the flesh (the selfish desires, whatever their bent) , aided by the outside influence of friends, argue and discuss the question, urging that no radical measures must be taken—that such a course would be foolish, insane, impossible. ‘The flesh insists that the old course cannot be changed, but will agree to slight modifications, and to do nothing so extreme as before.

The vast majority of God’s people seem to agree to this partnership, which is really still the reign of selfishness. But others insist that the spirit or mind of Christ shall have the control. The battle which ensues is a hard one (Gal. 5:16, 17); but the new will should conquer, and self with its own selfishness, or depraved desires, be reckoned dead.—Col. 2:20; 3:3; Rom. 6:2-8.

But does this end the battle forever? No;—
"Ne'er think the victory won,
Nor once at ease sit down;
Thine arduous task will not be done
Till thou hast gained thy crown."

Ah, yes, we must renew the battle daily, and help divine implore and receive, that we may finish our course with joy. We must not only conquer self, but, as the Apostle did, we must keep our bodies under. (1 Cor. 9:27.) And this,, our experience, that we must be constantly on the alert against the spirit of selfishness, and to support and promote in ourselves the spirit of love, is the experience of all who likewise have "put on Christ" and taken His will to be theirs. Hence the propriety of the Apostle's remark, "Henceforth know we no man [in Christ] after the flesh." We know those in Christ according to their new spirit, and not according to their fallen flesh. And if we see them fail sometimes, or always to some degree, and yet see evidences that the new mind is wrestling for the mastery, we are properly disposed to sympathise with them rather then to berate them for little failures; "remembering ourselves, lest we also be tempted [of our old selfish nature in violation of some of the requirements of the perfect law of love]."

Under "the present distress," therefore, while each has all that he can do to keep his own body under and the spirit of love in control, sound judgment, as well as experience and the Bible, tells us that we would best not complicate matters by attempting communistic schemes; but each make as straight paths as possible for his own feet, that that which is lame in our fallen flesh be not turned entirely out of the way, but that it be healed.

(1) Sound judgment says that if the saints with divine help have a constant battle to keep selfishness subject to love, a promiscuous colony or community would certainly not succeed in ruling itself by a law utterly foreign to the spirit of the majority of its members. And it would be impossible to establish a communism of saints only, because we cannot read the hearts—only "the Lord knoweth them that are His." And if such a colony of saints could be gotten together, and if it should prosper with all things in common, all sorts of evil persons would seek to get their possessions or to share them; and if successfully excluded they would say all manner of evil against them; and so, if it held together at all, the enterprise would not be a real success.

Some saints, as well as many of the world, are so fallen into selfish indolence that nothing but necessity will help them to be, "not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." And many others are so selfishly ambitious that they need bufferings of failure and adversity to mellow them and enable them to sympathise with others, or even to bring them to deal justly with others. For both these classes "community" would merely serve to hinder the learning of the proper and needed lessons.

Such communities, if left to the rule of the majority, would sink to the level of the majority; for the progressive, active minority, finding that nothing could be gained by energy and thrift over carelessness and sloth, would also grow careless and indolent. If governed by organisers of strong will, as Life Trustees and Managers, on a paternal principle, the result would be more favourable financially; but the masses, deprived of personal responsibility, would degenerate into mere tools and slaves of the Trustees.

To sound judgment it therefore appears that the method of individualism, with its liberty and responsibility, is the best one for the development of intelligent beings; even though it may work hardships many times to all, and sometimes to many.

Sound judgment can see that if the Millennial Kingdom were established on the earth, with the divine rulers then promised, backed by unerring wisdom and full power to use it, laying "judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet," and ruling not by consent of majorities, but by righteous judgment, as "with a rod of iron"—then communism could succeed; probably it would be the very best condition, and if so it will be the method chosen by the King of kings. But for that we wait; and not having the power or the wisdom to use such theocratic power, the spirit of a sound mind simply bides the Lord's time, praying meanwhile, "Thy Kingdom come, they will be done on earth as it is in heaven." And after Christ's Kingdom shall have brought all the willing back to God and righteousness, and shall have destroyed all the unwilling, then, with Love the rule of earth as it is of heaven, we may suppose that men will share earth's mercies in common, as do the angels the bounties of heaven.

(2) Experience proves the failure of communistic methods in the present time. There have been several such communities; and the result has always been failure. The Oneida community of New York is one whose failure has long been recognised. Another, the Harmony Society of Pennsylvania, soon disappointed the hopes of its founders, for so much discord prevailed that it divided. The branch known as Economites located near Pittsburg, Pa., flourished for a while, after a fashion, but is now quite withered; and possession of its property is now being disputed in the Society and in the courts of law.

Other communistic societies are starting now, which will be far less successful than these because the times are different; independence is greater, respect and reverence are less, majorities will rule, and without superhuman leaders are sure to fail. Wise worldly leaders are looking out for themselves, while wise Christians are busy in other channels—obeying the Lord's command, "Go thou and preach the Gospel."

(3) The Bible does not teach Communism, but does teach loving, considerate Individualism, except in the sense of family communism—each family acting as a unit, of which the father is the head and the wife with him, his fellow- heir of the grace of life, his partner in every joy and benefit as well as in every adversity and sorrow.

True, God permitted a communistic arrangement in the primitive Church, referred to in this article; but this may have been for the purpose of illustrating to us the unwisdom of the method; and lest some, thinking of the scheme now, should conclude that the apostles did not command and organise communities, because they lacked the wisdom to devise and carry out such methods; for not a word can be quoted from our Lord or the apostles advocating the communistic principles; but much can be quoted to the contrary.

True, the Apostle Peter (and probably other apostles) knew of, and co-operated in, that first communistic arrangement, even if he did not teach the system. It has been inferred, too, that the death of Ananias and Sapphira was an indication that the giving of all the goods of the believers was compulsory; but not so: their sin was that of lying, as Peter declared in reviewing the case. While they had the land there was no harm in keeping it if they got it honestly; and even after they had sold it no harm was done: the wrong was in misrepresenting that the sum of money turned in was their all, when it was not their all. They were attempting to cheat others by getting a share of their ails without giving their own all.

As a matter of fact, the Christian Community at Jerusalem was a failure. “There arose a murmuring”—’’because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.” Although under the Apostolic inspection the Church was pure, free from “tares,” and all had the treasure of the new spirit or “mind of Christ,” yet evidently that treasure was only in warped and twisted earthen vessels which could not get along well together.

The apostles soon found that the management of the community would greatly interfere with their real work—the preaching of the gospel. So they abandoned those things to others. The Apostle Paul and others travelled from city to city preaching Christ and Him crucified; but, so far as the record shows, they never mentioned communism and never organised a community; and yet St. Paul declares, “I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.’’ This proves that Communism is no part of the gospel, nor of the counsel of God for this age.

On the contrary, the Apostle Paul exhorted and instructed the Church to do things which it would be wholly impossible to do as members of a communistic society—to each “provide for his own”; to “lay by on the first day of the week” money for the Lord’s service, according as the Lord had prospered them; that servants should obey their masters, rendering the service with a double good will if the master were also a brother in Christ; and how masters should treat their servants, as those who must themselves give an account to the great Master, Christ. —1 Tim. 5:8; 6:1; 1 Cor. 16:2; Eph. 6:5-9.

Our Lord Jesus not only did not establish a Community while He lived, but He never taught that such should be established. On the contrary, in His parables He taught,—that all have not the same number of pounds or talents given them, but each is a steward and should individually (not collectively, as a commune) manage his own affairs. and render his own account. (Matt. 25:14-28; Luke 19:12-24. See also James 4:13, 15.) When dying, our Lord commended His mother to the care of His disciple John, and the record of John (19:27) is, “And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.” John, therefore, had a home, so had Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Had our Lord formed a Community, He would doubtless have commended His mother to it instead of to John.

Moreover, the forming of a Commune of believers is opposed to the purpose and methods of the Gospel age. The object of this age is to witness Christ to the world, and thus to “take out a people for His name”; and to this end each believer is exhorted to be a burning and a shining light before men—the world in general—and not before and to each other merely. Hence, after permitting the first Christian Community to be established, to show that the failure to establish Communities generally was not an oversight, the Lord broke it up, and scattered the believers everywhere, to preach the gospel to every creature. We read,—”And at that time there was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles,” and they went everywhere preaching the gospel.—Acts 8:1, 4; 11:19.

It is still the work of God’s people to shine as lights in the midst of the world, and not to shut themselves up in convents and cloisters or as communities. The promises of Paradise will not be realised by joining such communities. The desire to join such “confederacies” is but a part of the general spirit of our day, against which we are forewarned. (Isa. 8:12.) “Trust in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.” “Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things, and to stand before the Son of Man.” —Luke 21:36.

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The Ten Virgins.

Matthew 25:1-13.

“Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the *SON* of Man cometh.”

IT was probably on the last Sunday of His earthly career that our Lord foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, the scattering of His followers, a long period of wars and rumours of wars, etc., and finally His second coming, as recorded in Matthew, chapter 25. This information was most appropriate to the Apostles at that time, for their expectations had run in a different direction. They had thought of the Lord being exalted as the Messiah, and that Jerusalem would be the seat of His empire: It was given in answer to their questions—”When shall these things be”, and “What shall be the sign of Thy presence.”* Jesus, in His great prophecy of Matt. 24, had explained these matters, and indicated that His second coming would be in strenuous times, when, if it were possible, the very elect would be deceived—in which, as it was in the days of Noah, so it would then be in the days of the Son of Man, that the people would be eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage, and be unaware of the coming trouble with which the present Age would pass away preparatory to the beginning of the new Age—His kingdom. To impress the matter upon their minds, He gave the parable of the Ten Virgins—five were wise and five were foolish. The parable then clearly relates to the end of the Gospel Age, as is indicated by its opening statement: “Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins who took their lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom.” It has not been applicable all the way down the Age, but to the particular time when the Bridegroom should come.

Throughout the Scriptures the Church is represented as a Bride in preparation for her marriage. The Bridegroom is uniformly the Lord Jesus, to whom belongs the entire inheritance, and the opportunity granted to the Lord’s followers in the present time is that of becoming His Bride and joint heirs (Rom. 8:17). They have no status or relationship to the King eternal except as they obtain it by union with the King’s Son. The type of this in the Old Testament is a very beautiful one; Abraham typified the Heavenly Father, very rich; Isaac typified our Lord Jesus, the seed of promise, the heir of all; Abraham’s servant sent to call a wife for Isaac beautifully typified the holy spirit, which during this Gospel Age has been selecting the Church of which the Apostle says: “I have espoused you as a chaste virgin unto one husband, which is Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2).

Throughout this Age the Church, under the guidance and protection of the holy spirit, has been approaching the Father’s house of many mansions, the heavenly home promised. If we rightly understand the matter, we are now approaching the end of the journey. Soon the Bride, like Rebecca, will alight from the camel and pass under the veil and. will be received by the heavenly Bridegroom. It is in harmony with this thought that the Apostle assures us that the Church will share in the covenant made with Abraham—”If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:16, 29) .

Several of our Lord’s parables related to this marriage of the King’s Son, and His last message to the Church tells us of how ultimately the Bride, the Lamb’s wife, shall shine forth. resplendent in the kingdom. She is symbolised by the New Jerusalem. The announcement of Rev. 19:7-9 reads: “Let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. . . . Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

John the Baptist, as a prophet, referred to this relationship between Christ and the Church, saying, “He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom; but the friend of the Bridegroom, when he heareth His voice rejoiceth greatly. This my joy is fulfilled.” John realised that he was not a member of the Bride class. He recognised Jesus as the Bridegroom, and was glad to be honoured of God as the servant of the Bridegroom to give the introduction. Our Lord referred to John, saying that there had been none greater. John will surely occupy an honourable position in the future, yet it is stated that “the least (in the Bride company) in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he,” for these are to be joint-heirs in the spiritual kingdom, partakers of the glory,. honour, immortality, while John and the faithful of past ages will be upon the earthly plane as representatives and princes of the kingdom among men (Matt. 11:11; Heb. 11:39, 40; Psa. 45:16) .

Two Classes Of Virgins.

Having the parable located before our minds as relating to the Second Advent, we note the fact that it refers to virgins—pure ones. The parable does not refer to the world at all. Both the wise and the foolish virgins represent Christians—the kingdom of heaven class—consecrated believers, believers who have heard the Gospel of the kingdom, who are expecting the King at His second advent, and who have lamps, and who get from their lamps light, information, and instruction.

These two classes of pure ones, separate from the world, informed respecting the Bridegroom’s coming and kingdom, represent the two classes of the consecrated the “Little Flock” and the “Great Company,” the “more than conquerors” and those who come “through great tribulation and ultimately become conquerors” (Rom. 8:37; Rev. 7:14) . These are the same two classes that are represented in the Tabernacle type by the two goats, one of which became the Lord’s goat for sacrifice, and the other the scapegoat, only that in the Tabernacle type the goats represent the two classes all the way down through the Gospel Age, while the two classes in the parable under consideration represent the Church only at the end of the Age.

Evidently the Lord's object in giving the parable was twofold; first to give a salutary lesson to the Apostles and the entire Church of the Gospel Age on the necessity for alertness, watching and praying, anticipating and preparing for the coming King and His kingdom that they might be constantly ready for a share therein. Second, the parable was specially intended for us living in this time to let us see that it would not be sufficient to be hoping and praying for the kingdom and in a general way expecting the Bridegroom, but that we must be so alert and so full of enthusiasm for the event that it would lead us to make the wisest possible preparation for it, that we might not be disappointed at the final moment.

Second Adventists In The Parable.

True to the picture, a movement took place amongst the Lord's people of all denominations in the last century which culminated in what was known as the Second Advent movement. The virgins, the pure ones amongst Christians all over the world, were aroused with the thought that the coming of the Bridegroom was near, and a general lamp trimming, and a general investigation of the Bible, especially on that subject, resulted. True to the parable, the expectation of those dear people was unfulfilled—"The Bridegroom tarried," and while He tarried they all slumbered and slept. The lamps were measurably neglected, and a general stupor fell upon this class. But by and by came the midnight announcement, "Behold the Bridegroom!" This cry has been going forth for the past seventy years, and in response to it the wise virgin class all over the world has been awakening to a fresh examination of the Divine word. Among those who hear the announcement are some who insist that it is a false alarm; they have become so drowsy, so overcharged with the cares of this life, so comfortably nestled, that although they love the Bridegroom and desire above all things to be ready to receive Him, they are unprepared, refuse to investigate, and merely murmur to themselves, "Yes, we love the Bridegroom; we will surely be ready to receive Him, we have long been waiting for Him, but not yet, not yet. Soul, take thine ease—no one knows anything about the matter; those announcing the Bridegroom are surely in error."

As time goes on more virgins awaken, and as they do so the investigation begins, the trimming of their lamps. Then it is discovered that some who thought they were ready to enter into the joys of their Lord find that they are deficient in the all-important oil, which represents the holy spirit, and from which alone comes their enlightenment. The delay of the Bridegroom thus serves as a test to the virgins who are invited to go in with Him to the marriage. The delay serves to prove who are wise and who are foolish.

A certain amount of oil, a certain amount of consecration and of the holy spirit was necessary to be counted in with the virgins at any stage; but a larger measure is necessary now in the actual presence of the Bridegroom—more truth, more light is now due and must be possessed by those who would go into the wedding.

The virgins merely represent the Lord's people in general, so that those now living had nothing to do with the movement of the last century. However, the general spirit must be the same, love for the Bridegroom, expectancy of His presence and a desire above all things to be prepared to enter in with Him. Who, then, may we ask, has a sufficiency of oil, of light, of the holy spirit, from which this illumination proceeds to be able to be in the procession of virgins who will go in with the Bridegroom? This is an important question to every Christian. How necessary that we see to it that we have our lamps trimmed and burning and also a good supply of oil, the holy spirit, in our vessels— our hearts. If we have, there will be the fruit to be seen—meekness, patience, gentleness, long suffering, brotherly kindness and love. Depend upon it, that unless we have a good supply of God's holy spirit thus evidenced our lamps will go out.

" Give Us Of Your Oil."

To illustrate this holy spirit, this spirit of consecration which all of the wise virgins must have in full measure in order to maintain their light and their place in the Bridegroom's favour, and to gain an entrance into the marriage, the Lord, in the parable, represents the foolish virgins as asking the wise ones for some of their oil, and then shows the impossibility of its being thus obtained from one another.

The fruits and graces of the holy spirit cannot be obtained by the asking—they must be bought in the market of experience; they are of gradual growth, and cost painstaking care of words and thoughts and doings. It is because these fruits of the spirit are so difficult of attainment and cost such a price of self-sacrifice of worldly interests that they are valuable in the Lord's sight. None can get too much of this holy spirit, none can secure an over-supply for his own use so that he might supply others from his abundance.

The Bridegroom has in advance made abundant provision by which all who are invited may be properly equipped, not only with robes and lamps, but also with oil. If any are careless in the procurement of the oil, they thus indicate their unfitness to enter in with the Bridegroom. This seems to be the very essence of the teaching of the parable.

Those who hope to enter the kingdom and share its glories must make proper preparation in advance. If they wait until the moment for the door to close, however willing they may be, however anxious, they will not be prepared. The preparation requires

time, patience and care.

We meet continually those who give evidence of being true Christians, “virgins,” pure of heart, of intention, who are considerably interested in the Heavenly Bridegroom and in the gathering at the marriage supper, but who have little light upon these interesting subjects. They sometimes say to us, “Give us of your light; tell us how you know these things, why you feel so sure about them; while others are doubtless asleep, we are awake enough, but our lamps give no light.” We answer that it is not possible to give them faith in these things by proxy, that there is only one way to obtain the light, and that is by patient, diligent study of God’s Word, under the guidance of His holy spirit.

Patient perseverance in well-doing, in Scriptural study in calculating the fruits of God’s spirit, are necessary in order to have this oil in proper proportion. Many express regret, for they are so overcharged with the cares of this life, the deceitfulness of riches or family pride, or what not, that they have not the time to give to their spiritual development. We wish that they could enjoy with us the blessings of a good supply of oil and the clear light of our lamps as they are now shining. We can only tell them how and where the oil may be obtained. We must go on with our personal preparation and hasten to hold up our lights in salutation of the Bridegroom, with expressions of joy in respect of His presence and the prospect of entering with Him into the marriage.

And The Door Was Shut.

Soon it would seem that the First Resurrection --will be completed, the last member will be changed. Then the door will be shut, and no more will be permitted to enter. Thank God that this does not indicate such a dreadful condition as many Christian people have thought. It does not mean the close of the door of hope, and that all outside, the foolish virgins as well as the world, will go down to hopeless despair. It does mean, however, the close of the great and grand opportunity of the Gospel Age. It signifies the completion of the kingdom class—the Bride class, the close of the narrow way, to glory, honour and immortality and joint-heirship with Christ. The foolish virgins go and buy the precious . oil and get their lamps trimmed and burning, but too late for the marriage, too late to be of the Bride —the Lamb’s wife. In the parable it is represented that when they knock the Bridegroom will say, “I do not recognise you as being members in my Bride class; you must not come in.” Instead of entering into the joys of the Lord, they will be permitted, for a time at least, to have their portion in the great time of trouble which will then prevail throughout the world; weeping and gnashing of teeth, sorrow, disappointment, chagrin, will be the portion not only of the foolish virgins, but of all the families of the earth in that time. We are glad to know that the great day of trouble will prepare the world of mankind for the glorious conditions of the kingdom which will then shortly be ushered in. “The Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in its beams,” and many people shall go and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord’s house; He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For the law shall go forth from Mount Zion (the glorified kingdom, the heavenly kingdom) , and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem (from the earthly representatives of the heavenly kingdom)” (Mal. 4:2; Isa. 2:3) .

How inconsistent the thought that the folly of these virgins should not only exclude them from the kingdom blessings, but that even after they get the oil of the holy spirit later on they should be consigned to an eternity of torture or loss! How unreasonable, how inconsistent! On the contrary, how much in harmony with the Divine character and programme is this parable, as we have endeavoured to picture its fulfilment. We can sympathise with the foolish virgins, while we cannot commend them. We can look forward to the time when they as the “great company” of Revelation 7 shall wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, and be ushered into the presence of the Lord and the Bride, and become as represented in Psalm 45—the virgins, the Bride’s companions and colabourers in the kingdom work—servants before the throne. They might have been, had they been more filled with love and zeal, members of the Bride class, in the throne.

“Neither The Day Nor The Hour.”

Our Lord concludes the parable with the words, “Watch, therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour.” The Revised Version omits from verse 13 the words, “wherein the Son of Man cometh” because these are not found in any of the old Greek MSS. The thought, however, is practically the same—watch, for ye know neither the day nor the hour in which this parable will be fufilled. The watching, no doubt, has been beneficial to the Lord’s people all through the Gospel Age, and is still more profitable to the wise virgin class of the present day, because it explained to these their circumstances, conditions, etc. All of the wise virgin class should be in the attitude commanded in this parable; they should have a knowledge of the fact that the Bridegroom is coming; they should have lamps and a full supply of oil. Those living in this ready condition should be neither alarmed nor surprised at the message when they hear it, as it is now going forth, “Behold the Bridegroom is present.” We are living in the “parousia” (presence) of the Son of Man— the wise virgins are already falling into line in the procession and entering into the marriage. The full number will soon be complete and the door will be shut. All in this watching attitude of heart, with the full measure of the spirit of the Lord in their hearts, will be quickly attracted by the intimation that the Bridegroom is present. Those trimming their lamps, examining the Scriptures, will quickly discern the truthfulness of the announcement and speedily prepare and take their places with the wise virgins. The announcement, the truth upon this subject is indeed a testing, proving which of the professed virgins of the Lord have the oil in their vessels—the right spirit of humility, patience, love, devotion, interest in the things of the Bridegroom. Such only will be permitted to enter.

In view of this it is evident that our work in the present time is not only to proclaim the Bridegroom's presence, but to assist those who have the oil in their vessels, to trim their lamps—to arouse those who are drowsy or still asleep and who need to have the announcement, "Behold the Bridegroom," brought kindly and patiently to their attention, that they may secure the oil and have their lamps trimmed and burning ere it be too late.

Let us praise God for the blessings and mercies already ours and go on faithfully rejoicing in the light of our lamps and in the anticipation of the glorious nuptial feast and the later glorious work with the Bridegroom of blessing all the families of the earth. He that hath this knowledge will by it be separated more and more from the world and its spirit, and be gradually more and more transformed from glory to glory into the likeness of the Bridegroom.

Our lamps are trimmed and burning,
Our robes are white and clean,
We've tarried for the Bridegroom,
And now we'll enter in.

We know we've nothing worthy
That we can call our own
The light, the oil, the robes we wear
Are all from Him alone.

Brethren Finish the Pilgrim Way.

Word was received some weeks ago of the passing of Sister Hare, of Mona Vale, New South Wales. Our dear Sister had appreciated the truth for many years now, and rejoiced in it very much; she had not much personal fellowship with the brethren, and in recent times had been unwell, being confined to her home. The Brother sending the information writes:—"Our dear Sister Hare died on Monday, 22nd August. In a few words at the graveside (agreed to by the minister) I reminded the listeners what a humble Christian Sister Hare had been, how earnestly she had always sought the Truth, how she was our Sister in Christ, for whom we had prayed and whom we would always keep present in our minds until we would see her again in glory. We felt, I said, that there was a record written in heaven in her favour." The sudden passing of Sister Boyd of Geelong, Victoria, on the night of August 26th came as a shock to the Geelong friends and others who knew her. For over three years our Sister had attended the Class in Geelong regularly, having been associated some years previously with church work as a visiting Sister in the Geelong area. It was a pleasure to note how the clearer understanding of the truths of the Bible were appreciated to some good extent by Sister Boyd, in the closing years of her earthly way. While she is much missed at the Bible Class in Geelong, we are glad to know that the Lord knows those who are His, and will grant the reward accordingly.

Reports received recently give information of the passing of two of our New Zealand brethren, in the persons of Brother Moncur and Brother Straw, both of the South Island.

Brother Moncur, who finished the earthly way on July 16th, lived in isolation, though in past years had close fellowship with our late Brother Nairn of Christchurch, whenever possible. The daughter of our late dear Brother Nairn, writing to a Brother in Australia, states:—"I like to think that now they are together again and their sufferings all over. . . . He (Brother Moncur) was one in a hundred and he and father were like Brothers in every sense."

It was always a pleasure to receive correspondence here in Melbourne from Brother Straw. Some years ago he paid us a visit on his way to New Zealand and it was good indeed to meet one who loved the Lord and His truth so fully. The following is received respecting our late Brother:--"Our dear Brother Straw passed away suddenly on August 17th. He had not been well for some time with heart trouble. . . . I shall miss our dear Brother, for we were the only ones is Timaru in the truth, and used to have a study together, but while we mourn for those who have gone from us, we have the comfort and rejoicing to know they are forever with the Lord."

Increase in Subscriptions.

Subscribers to U.S.A. periodicals will please note that an increase of about 3 /- will now apply on each subscription sent through this office.

Melbourne Christmas Convention.

The brethren in Melbourne wish to advise that they propose holding their usual Convention over the Christmas period this year (D.V.) A hearty invitation to attend these gatherings is extended to all who love the Lord and His truth. Further information will appear in later issues of "Peoples Paper" and is obtainable from the Class Secretary—Mr. J.

B. Hiam, 44 Heath Avenue, Oakleigh, S.E.12, Victoria.

Correspondence.

Dear Christians—Your recent letter was again most helpful, and the booklets and papers which came last week were exceedingly welcome and interesting, especially, of course, the “Everlasting Gospel.”

I find delight and joy in reading everything you have sent me, and it is a rich experience to read such simple, sweet and beautiful words which tell of such simple, sweet and beautiful truths. Each of your booklets seems like a piece of pure-sounding, clear music, and the lovely choice of words used to express God’s true teachings, as interpreted by you (the Berean Bible Students) appeals to me very much.

I am enclosing a postal note for £ 1, as a donation towards your good work, and hope to be able to send you some further small contributions, later on.

Re-reading some of your booklets, I noticed that there are several free pamphlets, etc., which I should very much like to read, but which I did not mention when writing to you last month. If these are still available, I would appreciate them—”God’s Hand in the Affairs of Men,” “The End of the World,” “God’s Remedy,” “God’s Restitution Project,” “The Father, Son and Holy Spirit,” “Divine Intervention Near,” and “Distress of Nations.”

Also, do you stock any of the free “Kingdom Cards” ? If so, I would welcome some to distribute. Thanking you once more; I remain.

Kingdom Cards are gladly supplied free to all able to distribute. These are especially good for use where the Radio Cards would not be appropriate.—B.B. Institute.)

Dear Frank and Ernest—Please accept thanks for the book “Tabernacle Shadows.” I am glad to have all the information it contains, which is all to the glory of our God and our Lord Jesus

I am writing tonight for a friend who heard part of your broadcast on Sunday, September 4th, and who asked me to write for a copy of it. While writing for her I am also enclosing P/N for 2 / -, which is very little, but helps in the postage. I pass on the “P.P.” and it is passed on again, enriching the hearts of people who know their God, and so the good seed is sown—broadcast.

Thank you too for your letter the family of God sure know each other, and thank you for your good wishes. Yours very sincerely.

P.S.—The article on “Catholicism-Communism” will clear the minds of many as to what to do about the R.C. Both are evil, but I believe the R.C. with its everlasting emphasis on hell is the most disastrous, to children especially.

Frank and Ernest, Dear Sirs—Enclosed please find Postal Notes to the value of 1 2, being a small donation towards the work, through which we are continuing to receive help and encouragement.

Would you kindly send me two copies of each of the Dialogues broadcast over 2KY on Sundays, 21st and 28th August, and 4th and 11th September. These subjects have been discussed with friends and a copy of the Dialogues may explain things more clearly.

Thanking you in anticipation, and for the “Peoples Paper” and other literature received. Yours in Him.

Dear Christian Friends—We are regular listeners to your message each Sunday and invite others to listen-in. Your message given today, 18th September: we would like copy of same, and if a couple to spare we would love to pass them on.

Have you any good answer we could give to a 7th Day Adventist that calls on us and of course accuses us of not keeping the 7th day as the sabbath ? . . . The last time here she asked for a Bible and opened to Epistle to John (1 John 2:3, 4), much as to say we are supposed to keep all commandments, and if not the 4th, are “liars and truth not in him.” We say we keep the Lord’s Day, first day of week, Sunday, when our Lord rose triumphant from the grave; we understand all commandments except the 4th are in New Testament. A short note on this from you would be appreciated.

With God’s blessing on your valuable session each Sunday. Your sincere Christian Friends.

(It is very misleading to conclude that wherever our Lord or the Apostles mention the word “commandments” in the New Testament that it refers to the commandments of the Law given by God to Moses for Israel. There is not one Scripture in the New Testament exhorting the followers • of Christ to keep the Jewish Sabbath rather, the consecrated Christion is to keep every day unto the Lord. Much of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians was written to combat the wrong idea of the necessity to keep the Law

Covenant. In contrast with the spiritual truths of the Gospel, Paul describes the works of the Law as “beggarly elements,” and then goes on to say—”Ye observe days (Jewish sabbaths)

, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.” (Gal. 4:9-11.)

See also the Apostle’s comparison between the servant class under the Law, and the class of sons under Christ in Heb. 3:1-6.

For a complete and most satisfactory explanation of the Sabbath question, the booklet “The Everlasting Gospel” is highly recommended. It is supplied at 1/6, post paid. Also free pamphlets on “An Open Letter to a Seventh Day Adventist” and “Should Christians Observe the Jewish Sabbath ?” are gladly supplied.—B.B. Institute.)