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A WORD TO METHODISTS

FROM BISHOP FOSTER.

The following earnest and solemn words from Bishop Foster have appeared in various Methodist Journals, and in tract form. He certainly gives his trumpet no uncertain sound.

"The Church of God is today courting the world. Its members are trying to bring it down to the level of the ungodly. The ball, the theatre, nude and lewd art, social luxuries with all their loose moralities, are making inroads into the sacred inclosure of the church; and as a satisfaction for all this worldliness, Christians are making a great deal of Lent and Easter and Good Friday and church ornamentations. It is the old trick of Satan. The Jewish Church struck on that rock, the Romish Church was wrecked on it, and the Protestant Church is fast reaching the same doom.

"Our great dangers, as we see them, are assimilation to the world, neglect of the poor, substitution of the form for the fact of godliness, abandonment of discipline, a hireling ministry, an impure gospel, which, summed up, is a fashionable church. That Methodists should be liable to such an outcome, and that there should be signs of it in a hundred years from the 'sail loft,' seems almost a miracle of history; but who that looks about him today can fail to see *the fact*?

"Do not Methodists, in violation of God's Word and their own Discipline, dress as extravagantly and as fashionably as any other class? Do not ladies, and often the wives and daughters of the ministry, put on 'gold and pearls and costly array?' Would not the plain dress insisted upon by John Wesley, Bishop Asbury, and worn by Hester Ann Rogers, Lady

Huntington, and many others equally distinguished, be now regarded in Methodist circles as fanaticism? Can any one going into the Methodist church in any of our chief cities distinguish the attire of the communicants from that of the theatre and ball goers? Is not worldliness seen in the music? Elaborately dressed and ornamented choirs, who in many cases make no profession of religion, and are often sneering skeptics, go through a cold, artistic or operatic performance which is as much in harmony with spiritual worship as an opera or a theatre. Under such worldly performance spirituality is frozen to death.

"Formerly every Methodist attended class-meeting and gave a testimony of experimental religion; now the class-meeting is attended by very few, and in many churches it is abandoned. Seldom do even the stewards, trustees and leaders of the church attend class-meeting. Formerly nearly every Methodist prayed, testified or exhorted in prayer-meeting; now but very few are heard. Formerly shouts and praises were heard; now such demonstrations of holy enthusiasm and joy are regarded as fanaticism.

"Worldly socials, fairs, festivals, concerts, and such like, have taken the place of the religious gatherings, revival meetings, class and prayer-meetings of earlier days.

"How true that the Methodist Discipline is a dead letter. Its rules forbid the wearing of gold, or pearls, or costly array; yet no one ever thinks of disciplining any of its members for violating them. They forbid the reading of such books and

the taking of such diversions as do not minister to godliness; yet the church itself goes to shows and frolics and festivals and fairs which destroy the spiritual life of the young as well as the old. The extent to which this is now carried on is appalling.

"The early Methodist ministers went forth to sacrifice and suffer for Christ. They sought not places of ease and affluence, but of privation and suffering. They glorified, not in their big salaries, fine parsonages and refined congregations, but in the souls that had been won for Jesus. Oh, how changed! A hireling ministry will be a feeble, timid, truckling, time-serving ministry without faith, endurance and holy power. Methodism formerly dealt in the great central truth. Now the pulpits deal largely in generalities, and in popular lectures. The glorious doctrine of Entire Sanctification is rarely heard and seldom witnessed to in the pulpits."

Methodist Exchange.

That the good Bishop is not unduly alarmed about the actual state of Methodism is manifest to every observer who is not stone blind. Here are two items out of many that might be culled from both the religious and secular press substantiating the Bishop's charge. They read as follows:—

"CHURCH BOWLING ALLEYS AND BILLIARD PARLORS

"The *Christian Nation* is our authority for the statement that Mr H. W. Knight, before a recent gathering of Methodists at the Bible House in this city (New York), said that, as an adjunct to the churches, buildings should be constructed with bowling alleys and billiard parlors and the like to counteract the influence of the rum shops."

"A great many questionable things are done in many churches, ostensibly in the name of religion, but we were hardly prepared to get the announcement that things had come to such a pass that the Methodist Church would even consider such a proposition. A point made very prominent in the founding of that church was the idea of plainness and an entire separation from all worldly folly, but, having grown to be a large body and consequently popular, it is ready to entertain the proposition of having a gambling annex attached to its churches.

"Several instances are on record where young men have gained their first lessons in gambling at church socials and festivals. If they have thus learned these lessons at occasional gatherings of the church for festivity and silly games, how will it be when a permanent establishment that can be visited at any time is erected in connection with the churches? We have searched in vain for the divine commission, Go ye into all the world, and, for those who will not hear the Gospel, erect bowling alleys and billiard parlors in connection with the churches, in order that they may be entertained.

"We know that this move will not meet the approval of the large majority of the members of the Methodist Church, but we are sorry to see that such is the tendency in the minds of many in the various churches at the present time; and while this is going on, should there not be a people who are seeking their power, not from some questionable means of worldly policy, but from the great source of all power, the world's Redeemer?"—*Elder A. O. Tait.*

"*The Voice*," of New York, has also the following:

THE REV. DR. F. A. LLACY GIVES ADVICE

"The pastor of a Methodist Episcopal church in a city noted for its beer-brewing interests has been so greatly stirred by *The Voice's* Church and Saloon editorials that he was constrained to seek counsel of a brother minister of his acquaintance, asking advice as follows:—

"*Dear Brother*: My soul is stirred within me as I see this city wholly given up to the brewing interests. It would really seem that our churches are bowing to the liquor oligarchy. What are we to do—stay in the pulpit and keep silence, or preach Prohibition and take the consequences—abuse, non-support and persecution?"

"The response to this we give below:

"*My Dear Young Friend*: Your difficulty is one quite common to comparatively inexperienced ministers. I can fully sympathize with you in feeling as though you would like to fire broadsides of Gospel truth into the sin and iniquity that besiege the world on every hand. I used to feel that way myself in my early ministry, when I had occasional fits of 'enlargement of the conscience,' as I call it. It will require great care properly to suppress such impulses, and to keep the reins well in hand, so that you can manage the often none too pious men on whom you have to depend to supply the money for carrying on the Lord's work on an adequate scale.

"The preaching of the Gospel in a way not to offend has become a science, which it behooves a young minister to study

well. It has taken centuries to evolve this science in its present perfection. We are wiser than the early Christians and those of the middle ages, who injudiciously butted their heads against the brass walls of prejudice. They preached against particular sins, and incurred unnecessary displeasure, when they might have preached the Gospel as the never-failing remedy for all sin, without specifying, and thus have secured the respectful attention and endorsement even of the most hardened sinners.

"It requires great wisdom and discretion to preach the Gospel in the present day in the way that most of the influential churches want it preached. The day of fishermen preachers is past. The young man who would serve a wealthy pulpit acceptably today must bring into it education, culture and refinement, and must show great deference to the opinions of the men who are looked up to, and who have influence in the church and in the neighborhood.

"Regarding the particular question about which you inquire, you should be careful to make a broad discrimination between, for instance, a wealthy brewer and a wicked dive-keeper, who may, in the natural course of business, handle the former's wares and be under business obligations to him. Your congregation will probably stand by you in anything you may say about saloon keepers, especially about those who conduct disorderly and disreputable resorts, but it would not do to imperil influence for good by attacking a respectable wholesale dealer, or classing him in the same category with common saloon-keepers.

"Then, as to Prohibition, you know that question has so many bearings, especially in its political aspects, that it is well to feel your way very carefully before committing yourself to it unqualifiedly. You can safely say that you sympathize with the objects had in view by those earnest and excellent people who have become so discouraged in their attempts to keep the business within respectable limits that they even propose to do away with it entirely. I said that myself recently and it was heartily endorsed by a wealthy wholesale dealer, whose wife is a member of my church, and who is himself one of the best paying members of my congregation. Moreover, several Prohibitionists thanked me for my courageous stand against the liquor power.

"Now, my dear brother, I have great hopes for you. I know of no young man in the denomination who stands a better chance for ecclesiastical preferment than yourself, if you will but follow the dictates of your own sober judgment guided by a few such considerations as I have mentioned. Whenever I can help you in any way, command me, and believe me,

Ever sincerely your brother in Christ,

F. A. Llacy."

* * *

But Methodists are not alone in these matters. Here is another item of similar import:—

CHURCHES AND SALOONS

"There is considerable discussion in Pittsburg religious circles over the sermon last Sunday of the Rev. W. S. Rainsford, D. D., pastor of St. George's Episcopal Church, New York, in which he advanced some very radical views as regards the regulation of saloons. Dr. Rainsford, in substance, said that he had given the saloon question a great deal of study and that he had come to the conclusion that it is impossible to suppress saloons, at least in large cities, and the best thing the church can do is to make a compromise and countenance the establishment of places by Christian men, where beer, light wines and coffee can be sold. He also favored the opening of the places on Sunday during certain hours, and thinks the attachment of reading rooms would make them attractive. Dr. Rainsford thought that these places properly conducted would in a great measure aid the cause of temperance and lessen the consumption of spirituous liquors."

* * *

The foregoing arraignments by Bishop Foster, not only Methodists, but Presbyterians, Baptists, Episcopalians and members of all denominations may well ponder, for they apply to all alike. They come from one of the oldest bishops in the Methodist denomination. Had they come from one outside of Methodism they might be regarded as malicious reproach, but coming within the denomination, they must be regarded as his honest convictions in view of the broad observation of Methodism as a whole which his position as bishop furnishes.

Its confessions ought indeed to be startling to every Methodist particularly, and to others in so far as they realize the same conditions. The Bishop accuses the membership of

the Methodist church (1) of trying to bring the church down to the level of the ungodly by encouraging "the ball, the theatre, nude and lewd art. and social luxuries with all their loose moralities." What a charge! what a confession! Can the spirit of Christ, the love of the truth, or the joys of hope and of communion with God dwell in hearts that are so led of the spirit of the world? But does the Bishop mean that only a few such have crept into the Methodist church, while the great majority are otherwise minded? Evidently not, for he speaks of the membership of the Methodist church as a whole. He seems to see plainly that the whole Methodist field is overrun with tares, and that the true wheat—the saints who are actuated by the spirit of Christ—are numerically so insignificant as to be unworthy of mention.

(2) He accuses them of trying to make satisfaction for this worldliness by giving more attention to the outward forms of godliness—the keeping of Lent and Easter and Good Friday, and attending to church-decorations, etc.—in other words of having "a form of godliness without the power."

(3) He shows how the early zeal, enthusiasm, sobriety, consistency and devotion of Methodism have given place to pleasure-seeking with the world—how they are now "lovers of pleasure more than of God."

But what word of commendation has he for a faithful ministry that bravely endeavors to stem this fearful tide of worldliness in the ranks of Methodism? None whatever. On the other hand, his testimony agrees with that of the Prophet Isaiah (28:7. See also S. S. Lesson on Isa. 28:1-13, in TOWER of Jan. 15, 1892), that the ministry as well as the membership have become intoxicated with the spirit of the world, and are, therefore, as far out of the way as the people. He speaks of them as "a hireling ministry—timid, truckling, time-serving, without faith, endurance and holy power;" says they have forsaken the great central truth of Christianity and deal in generalities and popular lectures.

What an arraignment of Methodism. Doubtless the good Bishop would make some honorable exceptions among the ministry, as well as among the membership of Methodism, were he not speaking here of his outlook over Methodism as a whole. This can only be understood as his general view of the rank and file both of the ministry and membership of the great Methodist organization. In his estimation and from

his specially favorable standpoint of observation, having a full acquaintance with the workings of the whole system and necessarily a large personal acquaintance with both the ministry and the membership, he plainly describes the rank and file of both as "tares"—mere imitation Christians, Christians in outward appearance, but not at heart. And, pointing to the fact that the society is only a little over a hundred years old, he declares that such a fall from the original devotion and zeal of Methodists for God "seems almost a miracle of history," and adds, "But who that looks about him today can fail to see *the fact?*"

It is high time, in view of these things, that any of the Lord's true people who still abide in the midst of Methodism and who support it with their influence, their presence and their means, should awake and consider what the Lord would have them do. We are now living in "the harvest" or "end" of the Gospel age, when the wheat and the tares which the Lord allowed to grow together all through the age must be separated. (Matt. 13:30) The great mass of tares is to be bound yet more tightly than ever in bundles preparatory to the burning (symbolic) in the great time of trouble predicted by the Lord and the prophets and the apostles to occur within this harvest period, and which therefore can be only a very few years in the distance.

The sickle which the Lord is making use of to accomplish the separation is the truth due in this harvest period—the truth concerning the divine plan of the ages, showing both scripturally and philosophically the glorious outcome of the work of redemption in the grand "restitution of all things, spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19-21); and showing also the "high calling" of the Gospel church—not the mixed company of wheat and tares which constitute the nominal gospel church, but the true and faithful saints," whose names were "written in heaven," and which have never been "blotted out" because of unfaithfulness. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." The divine plan of the ages shows how those "called, chosen and faithful" ones (Rev. 17:14) are to be joint-heirs with Christ, how they are to reign with him over the earth for a thousand years, and how they with him constitute the promised "Seed of Abraham" which is to bless all the families of the earth.—Rom. 8:17; Rev. 5:10; 20:6; Gal. 3:16, 29.

OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT

NO. 1. MATT. V., VI., VII.

This sermon of our Lord is characteristic of the great Teacher who spake as never man spake. It is wonderful alike for its simplicity, its clearness, its depth and its comprehensiveness. It is entirely devoid of anything like oratory; for evidently its object was to instruct, rather than to play upon the emotions of his hearers. Indeed, it is specially noticeable in all our Lord's public ministry that his methods of teaching were calculated to keep reason on the throne, and not to permit it to be overpowered by an unduly wrought emotional nature. In this his methods are in marked contrast with many of those in vogue today. We note also that his words were simple and easy to be understood, and that they appealed strongly both to the judgment and to the heart.

The sermon was addressed, not to a promiscuous congregation of saints and sinners, but to his earnest and faithful disciples who had left all to follow him—who had forsaken business and business prospects and home and friends and reputation, and who, in lieu thereof, had cheerfully accepted the reproaches that fell upon the Master, as well as the necessary toils and privations incident to such a life. Consequently its teachings apply, not to the world, nor to mere professors of Christianity, but only to those consecrated souls who have likewise left all to follow the Master whithersoever he goeth. The occasion was one of those seasons when, wearied with exhaustive labor, he withdrew from the multitudes who sought his healing touch and anxiously listened for the wonderful words that proceeded out of his mouth—"And seeing the multitudes [and being too weary to minister to them] he went up into a mountain, and having sat down, his disciples came up" (verse 1), and he opened his mouth and taught them.

THE BEATITUDES

A comparison of verse 3 with Luke 6:20 seems to indicate that the parenthetic phrase, "in spirit," was Matthew's comment, and not our Lord's exact words, which, according to Luke, were "Blessed are ye *poor*; for yours is the kingdom of heaven." The reference we therefore regard as applying

to those who follow their Lord, who, though he was rich, for our sakes became *poor*, that we through his *poverty* might be made rich. Blessed are such poor ones—those who become poor in any sense of the word, whether financially or socially or otherwise, by sacrificing themselves for the blessing of others. True, we may have very little to sacrifice, but nevertheless, blessed are all the sacrificers.

The comforting words of verse 4 remind us of a similar expression of our Lord—John 16:20—"Verily, verily, I say unto you that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." (See also 2 Cor. 1:7; Isa. 61:2, 3.) It is those in Zion who *mourn* over and *lament* the mighty power of evil in the high places both of church and of state, and who, setting themselves in opposition to it, incur the reproaches both of the world and of lukewarm, nominal Christians. Blessed are all who so mourn; for in due time they shall be comforted in receiving the reward of the righteous and in beholding the final triumph of righteousness and truth.

Verses 5, 10, 11. The blessed *meek* ones of verse 5, who shall inherit the earth, are the same class who, according to verses 10, 11, are bold and courageous enough to withstand evil and error and to champion righteousness and truth. They are meek in the true sense in submitting themselves fully to the Lord, and bold in defence of his truth and his way, even the endurance of persecution for righteousness' sake. Blessed are all such meek, persecuted and falsely accused ones; for they shall inherit the earth: theirs is the kingdom of heaven. By and by they shall reign with Christ in his throne. Rejoice, all ye, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.

Verse 6 promises the satisfying portion of truth and righteousness in due time to all *that hunger and thirst after righteousness*. Verse 7 promises a *merciful judgment* to all those who exercise the same, and is thus the strongest incentive toward as lenient judgment of our fellow-men as circumstances will permit.

Verse 8. "Blessed are the *pure in heart*; for they shall

see [Greek, *horao*, discern] God." To be pure in heart is to have pure, sincere motives and desires. Those so disposed come to the divine revelation with reverence and meekness; and such, and such only, are prepared to see the breadth and scope of the wonderful plan of God, and how far it transcends the narrowness of human theological creeds and philosophies. Having no films of prejudice or vain philosophy before their eyes, and no clouds between themselves and God, with delight they discover in his wondrous plan of the ages the worthy lines of his truly glorious character—his wisdom, justice, love and power.

Verse 9. God is pleased to own the *peace-makers* as his children. These are they who have first themselves found peace with God through faith in the precious blood of Christ, and who thereafter devote their energies toward bringing others into this blessed rest of faith and peace with God, and who further seek to show by word and example how a heart at peace with God always seeks peace with fellow-men under all circumstances where the sacrifice of the principles of righteousness are not involved. All such peace-makers are the blessed sons and heirs of God.

Thus, first of all, the great Teacher bids us rejoice in counting over our blessings, showing us that even here in this wilderness state our table is indeed bountifully spread and our cup runneth over with blessings.

THE CHURCH, THE SALT OF THE EARTH AND THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Verse 13. "Ye are the salt of the earth," etc. The virtue of salt is its power to season and to preserve from decay and putrefaction, which power the true disciples of the Lord are here said to exercise over the masses of mankind in general. This, however, is not because we have this power in and of ourselves: it is the spirit of the truth, the spirit of Christ in us through the knowledge of the truth and obedience to it, transforming the old creature into the new creature in Christ.

According to these words of our Lord, it is by the influence of such persons, directly and indirectly, that the world has been kept from sinking to greater depths of ignorance and sin. When the spiritual life of the church has ebbed low, the world has always suffered in consequence. For example, remember the dark ages and then the opposite

effect of what is known as the Great Reformation. When spirituality revived in the hearts of God's people, the whole world began to wake up, and to receive some droppings of the shower of blessing. In the lives of God's people men see the moral distance between virtue and vice, and reason of a coming judgment when each will receive the reward that is meet, and they are thereby either shamed or persuaded to better and nobler lives.

But the possibility of losing this savor of truth and righteousness is also intimated: that is, we may retain the outward forms of godliness and lose its real power, its spirit or disposition, and thus become false representatives of the truth—hypocrites. And in such a case the question is an apt and suggestive one: "If the salt have lost its savor wherewith shall it be salted?" Or in other words, If the truth have lost its power over us, to what other power shall we look for the savor of the spirit of truth? "Sanctify them through thy truth," was the Lord's prayer, and if the truth ceases to avail for our sanctification and we turn from it, the implication is that nothing else will do it. And those who utterly repudiate its power are thenceforth "good for nothing," and their end is destruction. See also Heb. 6:4-8; 10:26, 27.

Verse 14. "Ye are the light of the world," etc. The whole world walks in the valley of the shadow of death, and the Lord's disciples alone have the light of life, the blessed truth of redemption and full restitution—the good tidings of great joy for all people. "Let your light shine," says the Master. Let it dispel the nightmare which haunts so many minds—of a fiendish and all-powerful God whose purpose is to torment eternally nearly all of his intelligent creation. Let the light chase this and every other superstition back to the dark source whence it came. Do not hide your light, but set it forth prominently and keep it trimmed and burning, that its gracious beams may reach as far as possible through the gloom of ignorance and superstition. And, thank God, the time is coming, and is now not far distant, when all the light bearers shall be exalted to power and great glory; for it is written, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." And when this heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, is thus set upon a hill [in the kingdom] it cannot longer be hidden; but its glory shall lighten the whole world. Praise the Lord for his mercy and grace!

MRS. C. T. RUSSELL.

FULLNESS OF JOY

"These things write we unto you that your joy may be full."—1 John 1:4.

Joy may be regarded as the effervescence or overflow of true and genuine happiness; and it is our heavenly Father's good pleasure that his children should be so full of happiness as to bubble over all the time. To this end he has prepared a table before them, even in the presence of their enemies, and filled their cup of happiness full, even to running over. (Psa. 23:5) This table of good things is his precious truth, to which we, who were poor condemned creatures under sentence of death, but sincerely penitent and desiring to return to God, have been graciously invited.

There, most prominently spread out before me, lies a most precious document: it is my *pardon*, sealed with the precious blood of Christ and signed by the great Sovereign of the Universe. It reads, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." And thereto is appended this emphatic assertion, challenging contradiction—"It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?" (John 3:16; Rom. 8:33, 34) "What!" I exclaim, "Does that mean me?" Yes, says the document, if you are one of the world—one of the condemned posterity of Adam—and willing to accept this free gift of God through Jesus Christ his Son, then this pardon is *yours*. And you need no one else to tell you so. Do you not hear? "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?"

With tears of gratitude I gladly accept the favor; and, truly, if there were nothing more on the table we might well say, Our cup is full. But no: there is more, much more; and, drying my tears, I see that side by side with this blessed document lies another which guarantees full restoration, to all the willing and obedient, of all the rights, privileges and blessings originally granted to our father Adam, but which he long ago forfeited, not only for himself, but for all his posterity. It reads, "Times of Refreshing [or renewing] shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, . . . whom the heavens must retain till the Times of Restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets since the world began." (Acts

3:19-21) Praise the Lord! I exclaim; that fixes a definite time when the blessings of liberty from sin and death shall begin to be *actually* realized.

Oh, how we rejoice! And even though we still wear the prison uniform of a diseased and dying body, and still abide within the prison wall of this present dying condition, we rejoice in hope of the glorious day of release.

But while clasping and holding and rejoicing in this precious hope, realizing that I am now recognized as a child of God and that in due time I shall be attired and blessed accordingly, my eye catches sight of a beautiful card. With trembling hand and a vague suspicion that this may be still another message of divine love, I lift it and read, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house: so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him."—Psa. 45:10, 11.

Was ever a proposal of marriage couched in more delicate and beautiful phrase? With astonishment I read it again and again. Surely it can mean nothing less than this: I am invited by the King of kings to become the bride of his royal Son—his only begotten Son and heir of all things. And since clothed with the imputed robe of his righteousness, which hides all the unrighteousness of my own robes, I am really considered beautiful in the eyes of the King, I am told, so that he desires to make me his bride—if I am willing for his dear sake to forget my own people and my father's [Adam's] house—the world in general, with all its hopes, aims and ambitions.

And while I gladly accept the offer and hasten to make ready for the glorious consummation, I find on this same bounteous table explicit directions as to how I may fit myself to behold the King in his beauty—of how I must appear in this precious robe of his righteousness which now makes me beautiful in his eyes, and that I may work out upon it the "fine needle work" (pains-taking embroidery) of an actual righteousness. Then, too, there are encouragements to perseverance in overcoming the world, to faithfulness in making

ready for his appearing and to watchfulness against any snares by the way. Then there are warnings of the dangers and hardships of the pathway which are permitted to prove my love and loyalty by my faithful endurance. And there are copious promises of grace sufficient for every time of need. And there is line upon line to assure and reassure my faith in my heavenly Father's good pleasure to thus exalt me to joint-heirship with his Son and to make me meet for such exaltation by making me also a partaker with him of the divine nature. (2 Pet. 1:4) Then there are precious secrets for those thus elected of God—with reference to the time and manner and circumstances, etc., of the Lord's appearing and to the glory and honor and blessing of the coming inheritance and the blessed mission of the coming kingdom. Ah! surely, Lord, "thou hast prepared a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: my cup *runneth over*," and I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Ah, says the inspired Apostle who wrote some of these things, and who saw the Lord and heard his teachings when he was here in the flesh, "These things write we unto you that your joy may be full. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us (fellow-heirs of the same promises); and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:4, 3) Oh, what condescension on the part of the divine Father and Son and what favor toward us! We all are one—one family—the divine royal family whence universal blessing shall shortly flow to all in heaven and in earth.

But hold: there may be some who unworthily claim this honor while really they have no part nor lot in the matter. The only conditions upon which we can claim these precious promises are those of faith and obedience. And if we are still trusting in the finished redemptive work of Christ, and obedient to the heavenly calling, we are walking in the light of God's promises and instruction. And since in God is no darkness at all, and he has promised to guide us continually by his spirit through his Word, we cannot walk in darkness while we follow his leading. And in thus following where he leads and hearkening to his voice, and in making known our wants and our gratitude and love in prayer, which he has promised always to hear and heed, we have sweet fellowship with him and with his dear Son, our Lord Jesus. And not only so, but we have sweet fellowship, also with all saints who are faithfully traveling in the same way.

"This, then," says the Apostle, "is the message which we have heard of him and declare unto you, That God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." If we have fellowship with him we are walking (progressing) in the light—in the light which divine truth sheds about us and in the light of his approving countenance.

"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness [walk contrary to his truth] we lie [for God does not lead his children that way], and do not the truth." Ah, there is the trouble. If any walk in darkness [away from the truth and toward error] it is not God's fault, but their own, in not obeying the truth. Let us walk in the light.

SOME CONGREGATIONALISTS WAKING UP

An evidence of growth of public opinion on the subject of eternal torment was recently afforded in the Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, of which Henry Ward Beecher was formerly pastor. The church takes up special collections for Missions, and it was decided recently that for the year 1893 no moneys should go into their usual missionary channel, the "American Board of Foreign Missions," unless at the specific request of contributors; but that instead all should go to a missionary in Japan known to hold views in opposition to eternal torment. This motion was made by the present pastor, and only one person voted against it—a Mr. Bliss, whose name suggests his composure and joy even though all others of the race were in torment.

One gentleman present, Dr. Raymond, speaking on the

subject at the meeting, expressed his convictions very earnestly. As reported in the *New York Tribune*, he said:

"I am sick and tired of going to the American Board in sufferance to aid in supporting missionaries who believe out and out in the damnation of all the heathen, and that damnable heresy that God doesn't love the heathen. I am tired of the whole miserable humbug, and I won't give a cent to spread the news of damnation. I won't let the damnable doctrine be disseminated by my money. That God is love is good news, but it is made stale old stuff by these men who drag a Juggernaut car over the heathen and want us to feed the beasts that haul it. It is my Christian duty not to give to any concern that will teach the heathen that their fathers went to hell."

DEDICATING THE TEMPLE

I. QUARTER, LESSON VI., FEB. 5th, EZRA 6:14-22.

Golden Text—"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."—Psa. 122:1.

The time of this lesson is about five years after that of the last two lessons. The Temple had been finished, although the wall of the city of Jerusalem was yet far from completed, and had been for a time abandoned.

VERSE 14 evidently refers, not only to the rebuilding of the Temple, but also to the city wall; because it mentions the commandment of Artaxerxes as well as those of Cyrus and Darius. King Artaxerxes' command went forth long after the Temple was finished, and had reference merely to the city wall, completed over fifty years after the completion of the Temple.

VERSES 15, 16 draw special attention to "the house" of God, the Temple. This structure was undoubtedly built according to the specifications of King Cyrus, and if so was sixty cubits high and sixty cubits long (Ezra 6:3): it was therefore of larger dimensions than that of Solomon, although greatly inferior to it in ornamentation. Its dedication was, therefore, a very notable event with the people returned from Babylon, not one of whom, probably, had seen Solomon's Temple, which was destroyed about ninety years previous.

VERSES 17-22 describe the elaborate ceremony with which the Temple was dedicated, although it was all as nothing compared with the dedication of Solomon's Temple; however, the people now were poor in comparison, and certainly did nobly and generously, their circumstances considered. This suggests to our minds the consecration of the *living* temple,

and how the offerings of themselves to the Lord, on the part of the "living stones," is pleasing and acceptable to God through Christ, none the less on the part of those who have few talents than of those who have many.

One point of this lesson specially worthy of note, by those who have fallen into the error of supposing that Israel and Judah were never re-united after their separation in the days of Rehoboam, and who claim that the ten tribes, styled "Israel," were all lost and that only the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, styled "Judah," returned to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity, is that the people of Judah and Benjamin are not mentioned in this narrative, while the Levites are mentioned and the people as a whole are referred to as "children of Israel"; and it is specially stated (verse 17) that the *sin-offering* was of "twelve he-goats according to the number of the tribes of Israel." What better evidence could we have that all the twelve tribes were represented among these returned captives than this fact that the *sin-offering* was for all the tribes? None; except that our Lord and the Apostles in their day repeatedly addressed the descendants of those people as "Israel" and "Israelites."

The *Golden Text* is frequently misapplied by Christian people to some earthly structure of wood or brick or stone. Let us see in it the real house of God—the church of living stones, being fitted and prepared for the indwelling of God by his spirit. Let us rejoice to enter into this, the antitypical house of God, soon to be glorified. Let us rejoice to have our names written among its members—"written in heaven."

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER

I. QUARTER, LESSON VII., FEB. 12, NEH. 1:1-11.

Golden Text—"Lord, be thou my helper."—Psa. 30:10.

VERSES 1-3. Nehemiah was an Israelite of the tribe of Judah. He was of one of those families which had not returned to Palestine under Cyrus' decree of about ninety years

previous. He was an influential man, a Counselor to King Artaxerxes; for such is the significance of the title "Cup-bearer" (verse 11) His attention was called to the pitiable

condition of the returned Jews by his brother and certain others of his tribe who had returned to Babylon. The seventy years intervening between this lesson and the last had not been years of prosperity, but of adversity, to the Israelites, both in Jerusalem and in Babylon. Their enemies, taking advantage of the weaknesses of Ahasuerus, who reigned during the interim, had attacked the partially rebuilt walls and gates of the city of Jerusalem and had wrecked the former and burned the latter, which were of wood, and at Babylon, as we learn from the Book of Esther, a plot for the complete extermination of the Israelites had almost succeeded under the guidance of their enemies led by Haman—but had been prevented by divine interposition.

VERSES 4-11. Nehemiah's subsequent history proves him to have been a great man—a man of wisdom and of executive ability—and his conduct as here related testifies to the same; for he at once sought the Lord, desiring of him wisdom and grace that he might act aright—that he might perform what he felt to be his duty toward his people—"Israel."

In this we have a lesson which every real Christian's experience corroborates. Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory (i. e., for self-glorification or honor), but let all things be done for the Lord's glory. And whoever is seeking service from such a motive will surely seek the divine wisdom to guide into the divine will and work.

Prayer is not to be entered into with a view to changing the divine will and getting it to conform to our imperfect

ideas, but rather to bring our hearts and minds and conduct into conformity to the divine will, assured that therein is our greatest and truest happiness. Nehemiah's prayer was of this proper sort. He confesses the justice of the Lord's chastisement of Israel for their sins. He properly includes himself with the others of his nation. He recalls the fact that God's dealings were just—in exact fulfillment of the covenant made with that nation. (Lev. 26:33, etc.; Deut. 4:25, etc.; 28:64) Then he refers to the Lord's promises in the same connection, That if Israel would repent he would return his favor to them.—Deut. 30:4; 9:29; Isa. 11:12.

Nehemiah was so deeply in earnest that he continued his prayers and supplication after this manner for several days; not that the Lord needed urging on the subject, but that the subject was growing upon Nehemiah's mind and heart. Gradually he was made earnest and strong enough to take an important part in the answering of his own prayer, as is shown by verse 11. His petitions closed, not with a boastful feeling that *he* had thought out a plan for Israel which would bless them and cover himself with honor, but with a plan which he believed to be of God, and upon which he desired God's blessing. He was about to bring the matter which was so close to his heart to the attention of the King Artaxerxes, and he prayed, "Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy [favor] in the sight of this man"—the king.

Let us each follow this same course. "In all thy ways acknowledge him [God], and he shall direct thy paths."

ENCOURAGING WORDS FROM EARNEST WORKERS

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL.—As you know, I am engaged during week days in examining titles to real estate, and from this I derive my only income. I have for a long time desired to enter the ranks of the colporteurs, but circumstances have prevented me, and I have been obliged to await the Lord's due time. The door of opportunity for greater service seems to have opened now, for I have been enabled to effect an arrangement whereby I can use three days each week in spreading the truth, and devote the other three days to business. This will involve a considerable reduction of my income from the latter source, but I have no doubt that the Lord will provide sufficient for my expenses. Pray that I may be used always by him according to his will.

The work is progressing very satisfactorily in New York. Wishing you, Sister Russell and all the dear members of the Body at Allegheny a happy new year of joy and peace in Christ, I remain,
Yours in him. E. C. M.—

Maine.

MY DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL:—The arrival of the TOWER reminded me to forward to you the dollar for the year '93. Never in the experiences of almost half a century have such blessed views of God's great and grand designs so filled my soul with joy. I studied "theology," and graduated in 1858; and as I now look back upon those years they appear very unprofitably spent. Oh, such a jumble as my soul brought from the Institution! calling it faith, and trying to steady myself upon it, and calling on others to accept the same and risk their eternal interest upon it. But thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift! I now can and do rest wholly upon the blood of Jesus. I feel exceedingly unworthy, and I am quite sure the feeling can never become greater than the fact of unworthiness; but our blessed Lord is worthy, and through his merits we are called children and heirs. God is dealing very tenderly with me and mine.

I am trying to induce my Christian friends to read MILLENNIAL DAWN, and some of them seem to enter into the spirit of the books, while others, after reading till some superstition is exposed, return them with some disparaging remark. But it matters not. Indifference to God's truth will not destroy its vitality, or it would have been dead long ago. I stated in a recent social meeting my belief in a present Christ, and called attention to some of the huge errors that burden honest souls and hinder their prayers. Some appeared reflective, but incredulity sat graven upon most faces. My soul loves and rests on the glorious truths that our Lord is present, and that the sealing process is in progress.

I have no language to describe the beauty and majesty of the truth as it now stands forth; and I hope to be able to do something to aid the work of the TOWER TRACT SOCIETY this summer. God is greatly blessing me in spirit, while in temporal things I suffer for nothing. Blessed be his name!

May the blessing of God attend you and your colporteurs, is the prayer of your brother in Christ,
W. F. EATON.

It is well for us to remember, dear Brother, that milk is

for babes and strong meat for those of full age, as the Apostle expresses it. (Heb. 5:12-14) Was it not pretty "strong meat" for your newly interested friends, for you to tell them of our Lord's presence and the harvest work now in progress? I suggest that the simpler forms of truth be given first, and the "deep things" of the divine plan as your hearers develop interest, and capacity for them. This will be following the example of the Great Teacher, who told the plan of God only as it became "meat in due season," and who once said to his disciples, "I have many things to tell you, but ye cannot bear them now." It will also be obeying his instructions to us to be "wise as serpents, but harmless as doves."

The part of the plan best calculated to arrest and interest an error-blinded child of God will be the foundation—the "ransom for all." He has recognized our Lord's sacrifice as the ransom for the church only. Show him that it was for ALL and is to be testified to all, in God's due time. (1 Tim. 2:4-6) Next show the effect of the testimony in this and the next age—now a justification by faith, then an actual justification (or making perfect), by restitution process (Acts 3:19-21), for all who accept that ransom and its concomitant blessings.

Next your hearers will be prepared to learn of the Gospel age "high-calling," by route of the "narrow way" of self-denying sacrifice, to joint-heirship with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom which, by God's arrangement, is to "bless all the families of the earth."

Next show your hearers what the Scriptures teach concerning our Lord's resurrection-body and the manner of his second coming—that it will not be as a human being but as a spirit being; that flesh and blood has no part in the spiritual Kingdom of which he is the head; and that even the saints "must be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51) from mortal to immortal, from animal bodies to spirit bodies, before we can be like him and see him as he is. (1 John 3:2) Not until all these points, with their Scriptural proofs, have been clearly seen by your hearers will they be ready to hear appreciatingly anything about the Lord's parousia (presence) and the harvest work now in progress—and this may require days or weeks or months, according to the receptiveness of the student and his previous familiarity with the Word.

However, unless very skilful as a teacher, it is generally best to call attention to reading matter bearing upon the plan, as for instance the successive volumes of MILLENNIAL DAWN. After they have read carefully, then talk on the subjects, helping them over any parts misunderstood or not clearly seen by them. Every one who attempts to teach, in any capacity, represents the Lord, the Head and Teacher of his body, the church; and, as such representative, should feel his responsibility, and should continually seek divine wisdom that he may "speak as an oracle of God." Go on, dear Brother, and God bless you! I desire by the above comment merely to increase your usefulness and that of other readers by counseling wisdom in the handling of the sword of the spirit—the Truth.—EDITOR.

OUR CRITICAL READERS

Few journals, if any other, have such critical readers as has ZION'S WATCH TOWER. And we are glad of this. Prove critically all that is offered you, by us and by others, by the Word of the Lord; and let us know whenever you find a discrepancy. We will be pleased to correct an error.

We refer more to a number of letters received calling

attention to our comments on verses 15 and 16 of the Bible Study for Dec. 25th, in our issue of Dec. 1st, '92. These letters were nicely expressed; and inquired whether the "Shepherds," and the "Wise men" who visited the infant Jesus, were identical; and if so our proofs. We answer, No: it was merely "a slip of the pen" on our part which thus blended them.

THE TRUE CHURCH

I.

One Sabbath morn I roamed astray,
And asked a pilgrim for the way:
"Oh, tell me, whither shall I search
That I may find the one *true church?*"
He answered, "Search the world around;
The one true church is never found.
"Yon ivy on the abbey wall
Makes fair the falsest church of all."
But fearing he had told me wrong,
I cried, "Behold the entering throng!"
He answered, "If a church be true,
It hath not many, but a few!"
Around a font the people pressed,
And crossed themselves on brow and breast.
"A cross so light to bear," he cried,
"Is not of Christ the Crucified!"
"Each forehead, frowning, sheds it off:
Christ's cross abides through scowl and scoff!"
We entered at the open door,
And saw men kneeling on the floor;
Faint candle, by the daylight dimmed,
As if by foolish virgins trimmed;
Fair statues of the saints, as white
As now their robes are, in God's sight;
Stained windows, casting down a beam,
Like Jacob's ladder in the dream.
The Pilgrim gazed from nave to roof,
And, frowning, uttered this reproof:
"Alas! who is it understands
God's temple is not made with hands?"

II.

We walked in ferns so wet with dew
They splashed our garments trailing through,
And came upon a church whose dome
Upheld a cross, but not for Rome.
We brushed a cobweb from a pane
And watched the service in the fane.
"Do prayers," he asked, "*the more avail,
If offered at an altar rail?*"
"Does water sprinkled from a bowl,
Wash any sin from any soul?"
"Do tongues that taste the bread and wine
Speak truer after such a sign?"
Just then, upon a maple spray,
Two orioles perched, and piped a lay,
Until the gold beneath their throats
Shook molten in their mellow notes.
Resounding from the church, a psalm
Rolled, quivering, through the outer calm.
"Both choirs," said I, "are in accord.
For both give praises to the Lord."
"The birds," he answered, "chant a song
Without a note of sin or wrong:
"The church's anthem is a strain
Of human guilt and mortal pain."
The orioles and the organ ceased,
And in the pulpit rose the priest.
The Pilgrim whispered in my ear,
"It profits not to tarry here."
"He speaks no error," answered I;
"He teaches that the living die;
"The dead arise; and both are true;
Both wholesome doctrines; neither new."
The Pilgrim said, "He strikes a blow
At wrongs that perished long ago;
"But covers with a shielding phrase
The living sins of present days."
We turned away among the tombs—
A tangled place of briars and blooms.
I spelled the legends on the stones:
Beneath reposed the martyrs' bones,
The bodies which the rack once brake
In witness for the dear Lord's sake,
The ashes gathered from the pyres
Of saints whose zeal our souls inspires.

The Pilgrim murmured as we passed.
"So gained they all the crown at last.
"Men lose it now through looking back
To find it at the stake and rack.
"The rack and stake are old with grime;
God's touchstone is the living time."

III.

We passed where poplars gaunt and tall
Let twice their length of shadow fall.
Then rose a meeting-house in view,
Of bleached and weather-beaten hue.
Men plain of garb and pure of heart
Divided church and world apart.
Nor did they vex the silent air
With any sound of hymn or prayer.
God's finger to their lips they pressed,
Till each man kissed it, and was blessed.
I asked, "Is this the true church, then?"
He answered, "Nay, a sect of men—
"And sects that lock their doors in pride
Shut God and half his saints outside.
"The gates of heaven, the Scriptures say,
Stand open wide by night and day.
"So, then, to enter is there need
To carry key of church or creed?"

IV.

Still following where the highway led,
Till elms made arches overhead.
We saw a spire and weathercock
And snow-white church upon a rock—
A rock, where centuries before
Came sea-tossed pilgrims to the shore.
My sandals straightway I unbound.
Because the place was holy ground.
I cried, "One church at last I find.
That fetters not the human mind."
"This church," said he, "is like the rest;
For all are good, but none are best."

V.

Then far from every church we strayed—
Save nature's pillared aisles of shade.
The squirrels ran to see us pass,
And God's sweet breath was on the grass.
I challenged all the creeds, and sought
What truth or lie, or both they taught.
I asked, "Had Augustine a fault?"
The Pilgrim gazed at Heaven's high vault,
And answered, "*Can a mortal eye
Contain the sphere of all the sky?*"
I said, "The circle is too wide."
"God's truth is wider!" he replied.
"Though Augustine was on his knee,
He saw how little he could see;
"Though Luther sought with burning heart,
He caught the glory but in part;
"Though Calvin opened wide his soul,
He comprehended not the whole.
"Not Luther, Calvin, Augustine
Saw visions such as I have seen."
While yet he spake, a rapture stole
Through all my still inquiring soul.
I looked upon his holy brow,
Entreating, "Tell me, who art THOU?"
But such a splendor filled the place,
I knew it was the Lord's own face!
I was a sinner, and afraid!
I knelt in dust, and thus I prayed:
"O Christ the Lord! end thou my search,
And lead me to the one true church."
He spake as never man may speak—
"The one true church thou shalt not seek.
"Seek thou, forevermore, instead.
To find the *one true Christ, its Head!*"
The Lord then vanished from my sight,
And left me standing in the light.

—ScL.