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The Song of the Angels *By Mrs. E. Hunter*

DEAR old Christmas, with its good cheer!
What happy memories of childhood cluster
around this season!

We all treasure the joys of Christmas and recall with pleasure its sweet songs of heavenly music, the merry faces of little children bright with expectation of coming favors, the beautiful Christmas trees bespangled with gold and silver, and the twinkling little candles like tiny sentinels on the mount of green.

Sometimes at the top of the tree there would be a bright star, or an angel with outspread wings, bearing the message of joy.

Many are the delights of Christmas; and we are glad that the poor old world has had so much pleasure in the celebration. While we cannot agree that December twenty-fifth is the correct date of our Savior's birth, nevertheless we are glad to join in the happy song of praise and thanksgiving for Jehovah's gift of gifts to a lost and dying race—His Son. But ah! how few of earth's millions have any serious thought of the real import of the birth of Jesus, the Holy Child of Bethlehem. Yet it is the great outstanding event of history, without which there would be no hope of a future life.

Let us pause and consider for a moment as we glance backward on the stream of time. Let us listen to the Song of the Angels, as it rang out on the hills of Judea more than nineteen centuries ago.

It was in the quiet stillness of the night, and the faithful shepherds were watching their flocks in the open field. Above glistened the lovely stars, silently proclaiming the glory of God. Suddenly appeared the angel of Jehovah with the song that has come down through the ages: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

Immediately the heavenly choir caught the glad refrain and filled the air with the sweetest song of earth—the Song of the Angels: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

What a benediction, what hope for the children of men in the Song of the Angels!

"Happy shepherd on whose eye
Shone the glory from on high,
Of the heavenly majesty."

No Peace as Yet

AND now after so many years we turn our longing eyes in every direction for some manifestation of the promised peace on earth.

Oh, sad indeed are the conditions in the world—man killing his fellow man and perfecting every device for further slaughter; the idle rich living in luxury while the poor are struggling to keep alive the little spark of life. In the slums of our great cities we see sights that make the heart sick and the brain faint—little children reared in crime, who never had a chance, who were doomed from birth to fall by the wayside, many of them old before reaching maturity. Add to all this the selfish exploitation of the common people by corrupt men in high places, the gambling curse, the drinking curse, the insane asylums, the hospitals, the reform schools, etc. What a picture of the sighing, crying, and dying of the poor human race!

We turn from it all; and we listen again to the Song of the Angels: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Could there have been a mistake? Did the angels misunderstand this message which they brought from the courts of Jehovah? No; they were perfect angelic beings, and the message was one of joy and not of sorrow. How can we harmonize the message of "joy" and "peace" with the night time of weeping? Again we pause and look into the distant past.

In the Garden of the Lord, the one perfect beauty spot of earth, our first parents came into being with all the grandeur of perfection, mental, moral, and physical. But Satan, that old serpent the devil, aspiring to make himself like the Most High, reached out to acquire dominion over them. One act of disobedience to the just requirement of their Creator, at Satan's instigation; and the jewels of perfection began to fade. Out into the unprepared earth they were driven to wrest their sustenance from the soil as best they could, struggling with the adverse conditions amid the thorns and thistles. Separated from the fellowship of their Creator, the Eden home gone, the dominion of earth lost, and the death penalty upon them, our first parents were indeed reaping the bitter fruits of disobedience; and by inheritance the penalty has fallen upon every member of the human family. The sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto

dust shalt thou return," has never been revoked.

The first faint gleam of hope for the condemned race was that the "seed of the woman" should utterly destroy the power of sin. About midway between the fall of Adam and the Song of the Angels in the hills of Judea stands that wonderful promise made to Abraham: "In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; . . . and in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed."—Genesis 22:17, 18.

Some Christians believe that this promise was fulfilled when Jesus died on Calvary and thus became the Redeemer of the world. But a moment's reflection will prove the fallacy of such a thought. True, some were blessed and, through faith, passed from under the curse in Adam to the promise of life in Christ, "saved by hope." But more than half of the human race have lived and died without hearing of the name of Jesus. Consequently they have not been blessed. And we still have the sorrows of earth.

Blessings Sure to Come

YET the angels had sung: "Good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." We must conclude that the blessing tarries; for as we view the changing scenes of church and state we find no record of wonderful blessings having come to the world such as predicted by the prophets of old and as sung by the angels. Why the long delay in granting the blessing to all as promised?

Reflecting on God's Word, we find that He is a great economist and frequently accomplishes more than one purpose at a time. Evidently it was His will to permit six thousand years of evil to teach men the exceeding sinfulness of sin and its awful results; and at the same time He has been sending crucial tests to certain elect classes whom He purposed to use in blessing the non-elect world in general. The long time it has taken to prepare these elect classes for their future work gives us some idea of the importance of that work in Jehovah's sight.

In the Old Testament we have the record of some faithful ones who were loyal to God and the principles of righteousness under adverse conditions. Of this class the apostle Paul wrote: "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder,

were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy." (Hebrews 11:37, 38) Tenderly and with reverence we think of those dear prophets of old, and rejoice to know that a great reward and honor awaits them. They will represent the earthly, visible phase of the kingdom, "princes in all the earth" (Psalm 45:16), during the Messianic reign.

Another elect class representing the heavenly phase of the kingdom has been called during this Gospel age to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and to sacrifice with Him their little all of human life, aims, and hopes, exchanging these for "glory, honor, and immortality," proving under severe trials faithful unto death. Of this class it is said: "And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" as "kings and priests" unto God, ruling, judging and blessing mankind. (Revelation 20:4, 6; 1:6) They are Jehovah's appointed missionaries for the conversion of the world. Then that gracious invitation found in Revelation 22:17 will be extended: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come, . . . and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely."

Earth's Restored Paradise

MANY are the promises of a restored earth, the Golden Age long dreamed of by poet and sage, and spoken of "by the mouth of all the holy prophets."

As we catch a glimpse of these times of refreshing, we are assured that the Song of the Angels has rung true: "Good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

Let us consider a few of the blessings which shall obtain in that new earth. Justice shall be the foundation of the government-to-be. (Isaiah 28:17) Human life will be more precious than fine gold. (Isaiah 13:12) "They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat." (Isaiah 65:21, 22) "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."—Isaiah 2:4.

And again, "when the judgments of the Lord are in the earth the inhabitants will learn righteousness." "Their flesh shall be fresher than a

child's, and they shall return to the days of their youth'; and, blessed thought! "there shall be no more death." This will be Paradise on earth, with the gift of everlasting life to whosoever will give heed and receive instructions in the way of righteousness and life.

The Song of the Angels is on the eve of fulfillment. Good tidings of great joy are going forth to the meek ones of earth, a message fragrant with hope. On every side we see preparations for that perfect government which shall be "the desire of all nations."

In an interview some time ago Marconi said: "Science will transform the world. Within fifty years life on this planet will be so changed that we who are here now would have difficulty in recognizing it. It will be a better and happier world." And again: "The age of what are known as scientific miracles is not in danger of coming to a pause; it has only just begun." He tells much of the wonder-world to come and fears that life will be too easy for the human race with electricity doing the labor; that "if people are not careful they will deteriorate."

Groundless fear! Very few of the human family have had an opportunity to develop themselves physically, mentally, and morally. The struggle for existence has kept most of us busy. With long, delightful hours of leisure, what wonders could be accomplished toward the goal of perfection! The latent qualities of reason, memory, and determination will be developed; the Godlike quality of benevolence shall radiate from every face, which will be returning to His image, with the added blessing of health that bespeaks the harmony with nature's beneficent laws.

Jehovah's King Now Present

THE waste places of the earth will be made to bloom like the Garden of Eden, and man will have the privilege of coöperating for his own development. Already we see the desert blooming like the rose and streams breaking forth in dry lands—all because we are living in the dawn of the Golden Age, the due time for the blessing of all nations. Not all are familiar with the fact that the blessing time is in the world's judgment day. The Prophet says: "When thy [God's] judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." There needs must come the humbling of the nations by bringing to naught the

wisdom of men; for it is based upon selfishness. The Lord shakes the nations to shake out unrighteousness, untruth and irreverence; then the desire of all—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in a real, tangible form—shall come. God's mind is made up; He has declared it; He will do it. "Sing unto the Lord with the harp . . . make a joyful noise before the Lord, for he cometh to judge the earth."—Psa. 98: 5-9.

When Jesus in His humiliation came to earth to be man's Redeemer few recognized Him as the Messiah, the One sent from God. So now in the end of the age we find similar conditions existing; and again it is true that "there standeth one among you whom ye know not" (John 1: 26)—earth's rightful King, Jehovah's Anointed, veiled from the sight of flesh, but recognized by the eye of faith through the prophecies as now present, by the signs of the times, the predicted running to and fro, and the increase of knowledge—all indicating preparations for the blessing of all nations by the Prince of Peace.

True, there is a destructive work as well as a constructive work going on in the world today, which may seem to nullify the promised peace on earth. Many are the dire forebodings heard on every side. In a magazine article ex-President Wilson expressed the opinion that "civilization is tottering." It is indeed the world's dark hour just before the dawn. But again we see the wisdom of God; for this destructive work will act as a purifying fire to humble and make the world ready for the blessings which God has for it.

The silver lining to the dark cloud is the kingdom of Christ set up in "power and glory," which is the only remedy for the ills of the human race. Happy and wise are they who have sufficient faith to touch the hem of His garment (to recognize His presence) and be among those "millions now living [who] will never die."

When Christ and His footstep followers begin their reign of a thousand years, and the glories of perfection stretch out before the wondering gaze of humanity, for the blessing of all the willing and obedient of the human family, the Song of the Angels will ring out not only in the hills of Judea, but gradually and rapidly to earth's remotest bounds: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

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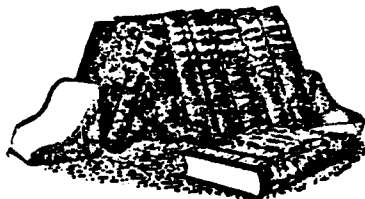
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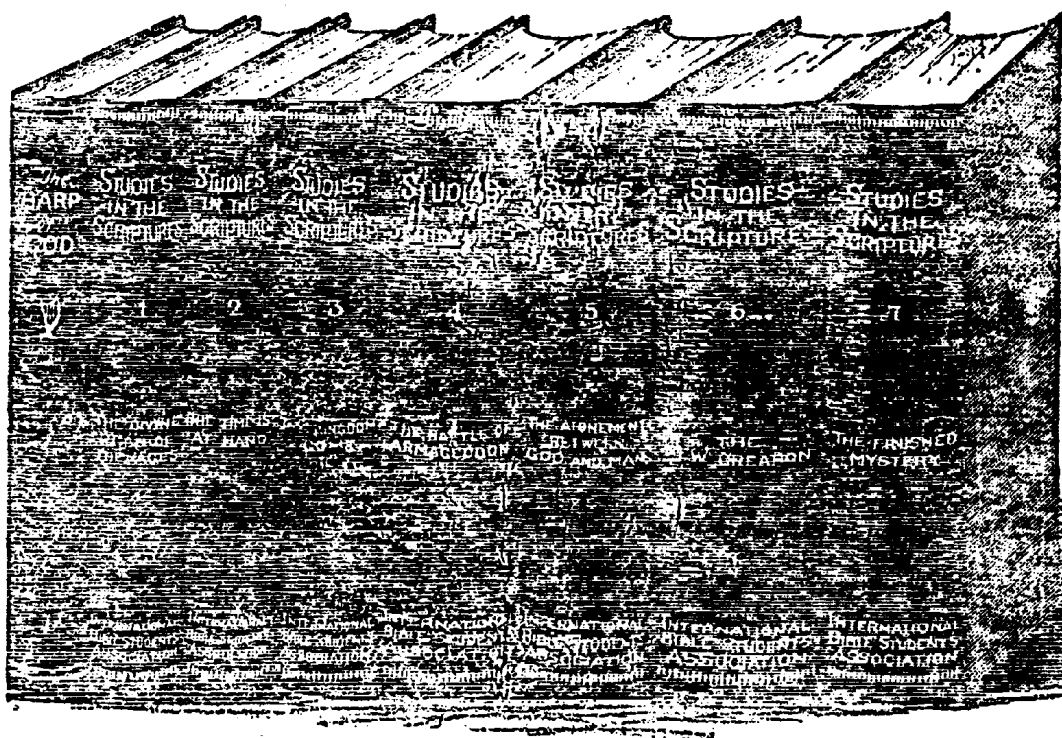
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About Santa Claus *By Gerald Barry*

THE name "Santa Claus" is an American corruption of the Dutch form "San Nicolaas" (St. Nicholas), whose festival used to be observed on December 6th. From early times feasts were held in this saint's honor in England and Germany, though subsequently they became confounded with the Christmas festivities. As many are not aware of the origin of the custom the following extract from the "Encyclopædia Britannica" may be of interest:

"Nicholas, St., bishop of Myra, in Lycia, a saint honored by the Greeks and the Latins on the sixth of December. His cult is as celebrated as his history is obscure. All the accounts that have come down to us are of a purely legendary character, and it is impossible to find any single incident confirmed historically. The main facts of his life are usually given as follows: He was bishop of Myra in the time of the emperor Diocletian, was persecuted, tortured for the faith, was kept in prison until the more tolerant reign of Constantine, and was present at the council of Nicea. It should be observed that this last circumstance is ignored by all the historians, and that St. Athanasius, who knew all the notable bishops of the period, never mentions Nicholas, bishop of Myra. . . .

"There are nearly 400 churches in England dedicated to St. Nicholas. He is the patron saint of Russia; the special protector of children, scholars, merchants, and sailors, and is invoked by travellers against robbers. . . . A legend of his surreptitious bestowal of dowries upon the three daughters of an impoverished citizen who, unable to procure fit marriages for them, was on the point of giving them up to a life of shame, is said to have originated the old custom of giving presents in secret on the Eve of St. Nicholas, subsequently transferred to Christmas Day. Hence the association of Christmas with 'Santa Claus,' an American corruption of the Dutch form 'San Nicolaas,' the custom being brought to America by the early Dutch colonists."—"Encyclopædia Britannica," Vol. 19, page 648.

The question may be asked: Is it wise to en-

courage the "Santa Claus" custom, or should children be told the plain facts of the matter?

To those who love honesty and truth, there is but one answer to this question: Such are bound to discourage everything akin to falsehood and deception. It would be better every way to point children and all to the real spirit of Christmas—that it celebrates in a general way the great gift which God provided for the salvation of our race; namely, the gift of God's dear Son, who was born into the world as the Babe of Bethlehem. (Luke 2:10-12). On this point Pastor Russell has well said:

"Although we cannot agree that this (December 25th) is the proper day for celebrating the birth of our dear Redeemer, but must insist that it was about October 1st, nevertheless since he did not intimate his desire that we should celebrate his birthday it is quite immaterial upon what day that event, of so great importance to all, is celebrated. Upon this day, so generally celebrated, we may properly enough join with all whose hearts are in the attitude of love and appreciation toward God and toward the Savior. The habit of giving little remembrances one to another at this time of year seems to us especially appropriate. God is the great giver of every good and perfect gift. He is continually giving and we are continually receiving from Him; but amongst all His gifts the one of greatest importance to us is the gift of His Son to be our Redeemer. While, therefore, thanking the Lord for this great gift and for the great plan which centered in it, it is appropriate that we cultivate in our hearts the spirit of liberality, generosity, . . . according to our conditions and circumstances. . . . We recommend that every little gift on this occasion should, as far as possible, represent or be accompanied by some little remembrancer of the great gift—something to draw the mind of the recipient to the fact that the great gift of God in Christ is and should be in the minds of all who give or who receive the trifling exchanges of the season."—*Watch Tower*, 1903, page 457.

Rewriting Earth's Literature *By E. J. Willits*

I CERTAINLY do enjoy reading your fearless exposures of the errors that prevail in all the walks of life, particularly among what the world calls "the higher ups"—big business, big politicians (miscalled statesmen) and big ecclesiastics. What a herculean task it will be in the Golden Age to rid this old earth of all the taints of sin that have become so deeply imbedded in every fibre of the present social fabric!

Take the matter of the world's literature: I have often wondered whether it will all be destroyed and a completely new literature written, leaving the dead past to bury its dead; or whether it will be "revised" in accordance with the truth. I can imagine the chagrin of the poet Longfellow, for instance, when upon his awakening from the sleep of death, he learns that the world has been 'turned to a pure language,' the message of truth; and perceives that he

violation of the just and loving laws of his Creator—was not proper. David's love for the Hittite's wife, which prompted him to place Uriah in the forefront of battle that he might be slain and that the king might have his wife was not proper. Aphroditean love, which we see manifested about us today, is not proper.

The eyes of the present generation are soon to be opened to the impropriety of it all and to the propriety of God's love—to its height, depth, length and breadth. Thus when every individual becomes a perfect creature, he will realize the truthfulness of the phrase "love divine, all love excelling."

All sincere Christians realize the truthfulness of this statement even now. I would urge all

such that they allow not Aphroditean love to enter into their hearts; that they allow not anything to take the place of God's superior love. [Cats may be urged not to run after mice; but will they heed?—Ed.]

In the Golden Age now at hand every individual who will bend himself into harmony with God's righteous laws will become more attractive and beautiful than the statue of Aphrodite. Then it is that admiration for this statue will be torn from the hearts of all. Worshipful admiration for other individuals will cease. Each person will be complete in himself. Masculinity and femininity will exist combined as a unit in each person, instead of in the present unsatisfactory divided state.

The Real Character of St. Nicholas *By Mrs. I. S. Marshall*

THE article about Santa Claus by Gerald Barry in No. 73 of THE GOLDEN AGE contains the query as to whether we should tell children the plain facts about Santa Claus. I say: Yes; and then tell them the story, which I will relate briefly as best I can.

St. Nicholas was born on December 6th in the year 300 A. D., and when grown became a monk in a monastery in a little village. His parents were very rich. They both died; and St. Nicholas, being their only child, inherited all their wealth, which was mostly in gold. There lived in the village a poor man with his daughter.

One night St. Nicholas went to this man's hut like a thief, but not to steal. He filled the poor man's boots with gold and went out. The next morning when the man got up and was about to put his boots on, he was surprised to find them full of gold. That is where the idea of a Santa Claus came from, and the practice of children hanging up their stockings at Christmas time. St. Nicholas was a helper of the poor; he did not care for others to know what he had given; he did not leave a card with his gift; for it was a gift from the heart. How noble is the motive of such giving!

Joy Department

I WISH to thank you for the pleasure and the benefits, and the inspiration I receive from your magazine. Each issue seems to be better than the one preceding. May THE GOLDEN AGE live throughout the Golden Age.

—J. BEST FOSTER, *Ark.*

I CONSIDER THE GOLDEN AGE the most valuable paper published today and hope to be your constant subscriber. This is the age for the truth, and you should feel blessed that you are the agency used for its propagation.

LEN H. CLARK, *La.*

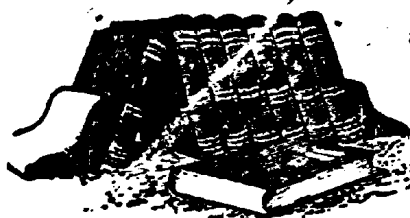
Prices Paid to Farmers *By W. C. Miller*

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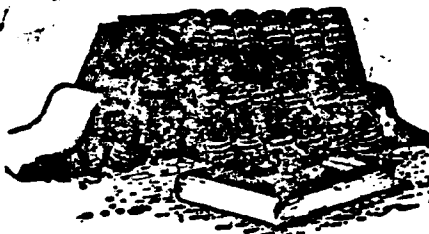
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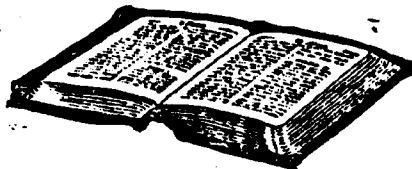
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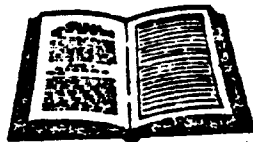


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RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

Universal Peace

"On earth peace, good will toward men."—Luke 2:14.

CHRISTMAS is regarded by many people as the date of the birth of the babe Jesus in a manger at Bethlehem. Whether or not the date is correct is of small importance, but the event was and is of the greatest importance.

Bethlehem is situated on an elevation overlooking a deep ravine, beyond which are fields where shepherds graze their flocks. Beautiful for location is this historic spot, particularly attractive to one of poetic mind and deep reverential heart, and doubly so since the great events, recorded in Holy Writ, which there transpired nearly nineteen centuries ago. From the surrounding hills of Judæa the shepherds had brought their sheep to the field opposite Bethlehem and corralled them there for the night. While the others slept, one or more of the shepherds kept vigil over the flocks, waiting for the dawn of day. The atmosphere of Judæa is exceedingly rarified, and the stars shine forth with unusual beauty and brilliancy, and thus the glory of the night is enhanced.

Without doubt these lowly herders of sheep were men of great reverence for God, men who trusted in his promises made to their father Abraham and hence were expecting the coming of Messiah. And for their faithfulness Jehovah rewarded them with a wonderful vision. While these humble watchers were gazing into the starlit heavens and meditating upon the majesty and expressed wisdom of Jehovah, there suddenly appeared unto them a star of remarkable brilliancy, standing over against Bethlehem, the city of David. Simultaneously the angel of the Lord, the heavenly messenger, appeared unto them, and the light of the glory of the Lord shone round about them. Then the shepherds were sore afraid. What man of reverential mind would not have been awe-struck at such a marvelous manifestation!

To calm their fears, the heavenly messenger sweetly said to these humble men of the fields; "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall

be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." (Luke 2:10-12) Awed by this vision and thrilled with their environment, the shepherds in wonder and amazement stood speechless before the heavenly messenger. Then suddenly there appeared with this angel a whole multitude of the heavenly host, angels bright and fair; and in celebration of this marvelous event of the ages they joyfully sang together an anthem of praise to Jehovah, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men".

Long centuries and the burdens of earthly cares have effaced or hidden this glorious vision from the minds of most men who call themselves Christians; and today these words announcing universal peace to those of worldly mind sound as but a hollow mockery. Nearly nineteen centuries have come and gone since that heavenly messenger announced the birth of Jesus and brought a message of good tidings; and after these long years of laborious effort on the part of some men to establish ideal conditions, with dismay they witness the whole world rocked from center to circumference and all kindreds and peoples engaged in the strife of tongues, tumult, distress and war. Now the great mass of so-called Christendom is trusting in the god of force and violence rather than in the God of peace and love. Millions of earth's habitants, including those who pose as teachers and preachers of the Gospel, have turned to infidelity, disregarding the Word of God, and advise, counsel and engage in strife and violence. Alas! their faith in God and in his precious promises is gone.

How different with those who truly love the Lord and who study to show themselves approved unto God! Their diligent and prayerful search to know the meaning of these events past and present the Lord has been pleased to reward with a clear vision; and now they are privileged to mark the majestic onward tread of Jehovah in the unfolding of his marvelous plan. And thus understanding, their hearts are filled with joy; and the sweet message of that heavenly host resounds through the corridors of the age, calling attention to the momentous

events that are transpiring and the even greater ones immediately to follow. Not only do they rejoice in their own hearts, but it is the privilege of such true followers of the Master with confidence to say to the bewildered and frightened of nominal Christendom: "Behold, thy God reigneth".

And now we invite all sober-minded peoples of earth—Christian and infidel, Jew and Gentile, bond and free—to come with us while we together briefly review this beautiful Christmas story, and ascertain its meaning and significance to the groaning people of all the nations of earth. Its message of comfort is intended for all; for the angel of the Lord said: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people". The time is now due for the world to begin to understand the real meaning of what occurred on that memorable morning in Bethlehem; and those who do understand and avail themselves of such knowledge will be greatly blessed and comforted in heart, mind and body.

Why should the babe Jesus be born at all? Why mark his birth with such ceremony and joyful expression by the heavenly host? The answer is the old, old story, which grows sweeter the oftener told; and never so sweet as now, because the time is here for its appreciation by man.

Four thousand years before the staging of this drama in the hills of Judæa, Jehovah had created a perfect pair—Adam and Eve—and provided them with a perfect home in Eden. He had endowed them with power and authority to bring forth children, to fill the earth and to control it and to make the entire earth as a garden, a glorious spot, a fit habitation for a happy and perfect race of people. To this first pair the Lord granted the privilege of life everlasting in a state of human blessedness, conditioned, however, upon a faithful obedience to his law. The wife, deceived by Satan into a violation of the divine law, in turn induced her husband to take the step of disobedience wilfully rather than be separated from her. The result of this transgression was an infliction of the penalty of the law, which penalty is described in the Genesis account (chapter 3) as a dying condition until death was fully accomplished, a return to the dust whence the Lord had taken the elements to make man.

Having judicially determined that the perfect

man should die because of his disobedience to the law, Jehovah chose, as a means of enforcing this judgment, to compel man to live outside of the perfect Eden and to feed upon the poisonous elements of the earth until complete death would ensue. Hence he drove the two out of Eden and set a flaming sword at the garden's entrance, lest Adam might return and partake of the tree of life. For 930 years Adam battled with the elements of the earth, daily succumbing, until at the end of that time he was dead.

The secret of all the suffering, sorrow, sickness and death of humankind from then until now lies in what occurred in Eden and following. While in Eden the perfect man did not exercise his power to beget children; and hence the perfect pair never brought forth children. It was only after undergoing the legal sentence of death, and after they had imbibed the poisonous elements of earth's vegetation, that this pair cohabited and children resulted. It is reasonable, therefore, to see that this condemnation fell upon the offspring; and that the father, now imperfect, could not beget a perfect child; hence the offspring of Adam would be an imperfect one. For this reason the Psalmist wrote: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me". (Psalm 51: 5) And for the same reason the inspired witness said, "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed [by inheritance] upon all men, for that all have sinned". (Romans 5:12) The ultimate result of the operation of the divine law of necessity would have meant the complete extinction of the human race. Today, instead of men living 930 years, the average life is much less than one-tenth as long.

God foreknew the course that man would take; and before the foundation of the world he outlined a plan for human redemption and blessing. Nearly two thousand years after the humankind had wandered in the earth in sorrow and distress, Jehovah spoke to his servant Abraham, likewise an imperfect man, but one who exercised great faith in God, and to him made promise that through his seed all the families, nations, kindreds and peoples of earth should have a blessing. (Genesis 12:2, 3; 22: 18; Galatians 3:16) Later, God organized the descendants of Abraham into a nation under the name of Israel, and with that nation and people made a law covenant and from time to

time reiterated his promise to bring a blessing to the nations of earth through the seed of Abraham. The Israelites verily believed that this promised seed was an earthly seed. The promise at one time was confined to the house of David; and when David ascended the throne the Jews thought that the time had come for the blessing of mankind. The prophets, however, foretold the coming of another and greater one; and at the time of Jesus' birth all thoughtful people of Israel were looking for the coming of the Messiah. God through his prophet had foretold that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judaea.—Matthew 2:5,6.

Here we emphasize one thing prominent in the message brought by the angel; namely, the word *all*. It will be marked in the examination of this and other Scriptures relating to the redemption of man that God had promised to bless *all* the families of the earth, and that at the birth of Jesus the angel announced that this is glad tidings which shall be brought to *all* people. It is not the thought of the Scriptures that such a message would be brought to all at the same time; but that in God's due time every one of the human race would hear this message of glad tidings and would each have the opportunity of availing himself of the benefit of it.

The race was justly condemned to death because of disobedience to the law of God; and this judgment could not be set aside or reversed for the reason that God is unchangeable. His laws are fixed. However, such a judgment could be satisfied by the demands of the law being met. In due course of time God made promise to the house of Israel, his specially chosen people, that a provision for releasing mankind from death and the effects of this judgment would be made. "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."—Hosea 13:14.

The word ransom means a price exactly corresponding. A perfect man had violated God's law, and death resulted. Therefore the only thing that could constitute a ransom or corresponding price for mankind would be the life of another perfect man, exactly equivalent to Adam while in Eden. In other words, the redemption and deliverance of the human race from death, and its restoration to human perfection and happiness, must entirely depend upon the voluntary submission to death of a

perfect human being—nothing more and nothing less.

At once, then, we see that none of Adam's stock could meet this requirement of the law and redeem the human race because all were imperfect, having descended from Adam. And this thought is expressed by the Psalmist, who says, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother nor give to God a ransom for him". (Psalm 49:7) Any child begotten by a member of the Adamic stock would necessarily be imperfect; hence the account concerning the conception of Mary and the birth of the babe Jesus shows that she conceived by the power of the holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:18-25) Therefore Jesus was begotten not by man, but born of a woman, and when born he was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners". (Hebrews 7:26) When he grew to manhood's estate he was the exact counterpart of Adam prior to his disobedience. Not until we understand these things can we understand why there was so much joy in heaven among the angelic host at the birth of Jesus. The heavenly beings had been observing for four thousand years the downward course of mankind. They had seen the great degradation and sorrow that sin had inflicted upon the human family, and now they perceived that Jehovah was making provision for the redemption and blessing and uplifting of all men.

That which man prizes above everything else is life; for without life nothing else can be enjoyed. The whole human race, being under the condemnation of death, ultimately must die. Why, then, did Jesus come to earth? Why was he born? He answers; "That the people might have life and have it more abundantly". (John 10:10) He "was made flesh and dwelt among us". (John 1:14) "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise partook of the same." (Hebrews 2:14) "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels [namely, a human being] for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Hebrews 2:9) Jesus himself declared that he laid down his life for the sheep. (John 10:11, 15, 16) Here he uses the word sheep to illustrate those who are willing and obedient to the will of God, that they shall receive the benefit of his sacrifice.

And this opportunity must come to all, as

St. Paul states: "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have *all* men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for *all*, to be testified [to *all*] in due time." (1 Timothy 2:3-6) Here again it is observed that it is God's will that all men shall be saved from the condemnation of death and thereafter brought to a knowledge of God's provision for them, which knowledge opens to them the opportunity of accepting the benefits of the ransom sacrifice. Hence, says the Apostle, these facts must be testified to all men in God's due time. As this testimony comes to men at different times and they understand it, they rejoice in it because to them it is good tidings, good news of a better thing for them—an opportunity for life.

Why, then, if Jesus died on the cross nearly nineteen centuries ago, should the human race continue to suffer? The Scriptural answer is clear. The promise to Abraham was that in *his seed* should the blessing come to mankind; and this seed must first be fully developed before the benefit of the ransom sacrifice can be extended to all. It is important, therefore, to perceive what constitutes the seed and how it is developed. The Scriptural proof is that this seed is the Christ, the Messiah, composed of Jesus, the Head, and the church, meaning the called-out class which constitute the members of the body of the Messiah class. Hence St. Paul argues: "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ . . . And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise".—Galatians 3:27, 29.

It has pleased the heavenly Father to devote the period of time elapsing from the resurrection of Jesus until the setting up of his kingdom to the work of selecting those who would be willing followers of the Master, and who would prove their faithfulness and loyalty to him even unto death, and to whom he would grant the privilege of joint-heirship with Christ Jesus in his kingdom. (Romans 8:16, 17; 2 Timothy 2:11, 12) The selection of this class has been from among those who have voluntarily consecrated their lives to the Lord. Not every one who says, "Lord, Lord", will be of that class, but only those who enter into a covenant with God by

sacrifice and continue thus faithful unto death. These are promised a part in the first resurrection and an association with Christ Jesus as members of the royal priesthood. Therefore we can understand the words of the Master when he said that only a little flock (comparatively speaking) of mankind would have this blessing.—Luke 12:32.

The purposes of the Lord in this regard are ascertained from the words of the Apostle: "God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called."—Acts 15:14-17.

Jesus taught his disciples, and through them the church has been taught, that after he had ascended on high he would return in course of time and gather unto himself the saints, and then would establish his kingdom for the purpose of blessing mankind. All Christian people have looked forward to the second coming of the Lord, and to the end of the wicked order of things and the establishment of a new and righteous order. This same thought was in the mind of the disciples when they approached Jesus just before his crucifixion and propounded to him the direct question: "Tell us when these things shall be, and what shall be the proof of thy coming and the end of the world?"—Matthew 24:3.

The Lord Jesus answered their question, and the answer is recorded in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew and the twenty-first chapter of Luke. He describes the great stress and trouble that is now upon the human race. Among other things he said that there would be a great world war in which nation would rise against nation, to be accompanied by famine, pestilence and revolutions and a time of trouble such as never was before; and all mankind are witnessing the fulfillment of this prophecy at this very time. Again he said in answer to the same question that there would be "upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves [restless humanity] roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the

earth: for the powers of heaven [ecclesiastical systems] shall be shaken". (Luke 21:25, 26) All the trouble that has afflicted the nations since the fall of 1914 has been clearly in fulfillment of the prophetic utterance of the Lord. To the Christian this means (and soon all the world will learn to know that this is the meaning) that the kingdom of the Lord is at hand, that Christ is present, that he is tearing away the old order of things preparatory to establishing a kingdom of righteousness and peace which shall constitute "the desire of all nations". "I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come".—Haggai 2:7.

The wars, famine, pestilence, revolutions and like disturbances that so much distress mankind do not constitute any part of the glad tidings. No one rejoices in this suffering and trouble; but the Christian rejoices that these troublesome times are the proof foretold by the Lord that would precede the establishment of his kingdom of righteousness which would bring blessings to all the groaning creation. The message that has been preached to the people for long centuries, and is yet being preached by many, to the effect that it is the Lord's purpose to save a few in heaven and to consign all the residue of mankind to a condition of endless torture, contains no glad tidings to any one of an honest heart. Surely it could be no real joy to any person to be convinced that he would spend eternity in heavenly bliss while at the same time some one near and dear to him would be spending eternity in torture. Such a doctrine is not taught by the Word of God, but is the result of a distorted interpretation of the Scriptures.

The divine program, which has been developing progressively for many centuries, has now about reached the point of time for the world of mankind to begin to understand and appreciate some of the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the love of God. His inspired witness wrote: "Times of refreshing shall come from the presence of Jehovah; for he will send Jesus, who before was preached unto you, whom the heavens must retain until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began".—Acts 3:19-21.

The word refreshing here suggests the thought of something that makes one happy after a long experience with that which is con-

trary to happiness. The autumn season marks the dying and falling of the leaves, the trees appear bare, and the wind moans and sighs through their branches. Then follows the long, dark, cold winter, picturing in a measure the long night of suffering and death that has afflicted the human race. In the spring season the warm, gentle rays of the sun, falling upon the earth, cause the grass to spring forth, the trees to bud and leaf, followed by the blossoms and the fruit, the singing of the birds and the rejoicing of all nature because of the reviving, or coming again to life, of that which was dead. Seemingly the Apostle had such a picture in his mind when he said that times of refreshing would come at the establishment of Messiah's kingdom because it would mean the restoration of that which father Adam lost for himself and all of his offspring, namely, life and all the sweetness incident thereto. The perfect man Jesus, having laid down his life and thereby providing the purchase price for the human race, now returns for the purpose of ministering to mankind by giving to him the very thing that he has long desired.

Long ago the Apostle saw this and wrote: "He [God] hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Christ Jesus] whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead". (Acts 17:31) The assurance here then is to every man that has lived on the earth that he must have a fair and impartial trial in a time of righteousness, which trial is for the purpose of giving him an opportunity to render himself in obedience to the law of God and live. It means that millions who have gone into death will return again; for "there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." (Acts 24:15) The great Master himself assures us that all in their graves shall hear his voice and awaken to the resurrection by judgments, i. e., a time of trial and opportunity for life and its blessings.—John 5:28, 29.

The work of reconstructing the human race will devolve upon the great Messiah, and that great work will begin as soon as the present trouble upon the earth has ended; for Jesus assures us that there never will be another time like it. (Matthew (24:21) Then, under his righteous reign, every one will have a chance of hearing the sayings of Jesus and then will

apply his words, "Verily I say unto you, If a man keep my saying he shall never see death." That Scripture, like all other sayings of the Master, must have its time for fulfillment; and no one could keep his sayings until first they heard them. The millions in death could not hear until awakened out of death, and the millions now on earth could not hear until God's due time and until they are told. That due time is about at hand.

Will that be a time, then, of rejoicing and gladness? The Lord through the prophet gives us a vision of that great time of blessing, saying, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose," thus picturing how the earth itself shall begin to yield that which is necessary for the sustenance of mankind and permit him to enjoy the fruits of his labors without the intervention and oppression of the profiteers. "It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God."

Before the coming of that glorious day, however, the prophet infers that the people would become very much discouraged and without strength. He pictures them as trembling in their knees and hanging down their hands, and for their encouragement says: "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you." St. Paul tells us that the whole world aside from Christians are blind, and blinded by the adversary. Many people are actually blind, while practically all are blind concerning a vision of God's plan.

The prophet then pictures the blessings during the reconstruction, saying, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert."

Then the prophet describes a way opened for the human race to journey back to the perfection of life, of body and mind, continuing: "And an highway shall be there, and a

way, and it shall be called The way of holiness: the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein". This highway is the Messiah, who is given as a mediator between God and man, to lead man back to the state of perfection; and the way to pass over it will be by rendering themselves in obedience to the law of the Messiah. It shall be a holy, a righteous way. No person shall be permitted to progress in wickedness, in profiteering, in oppression, in keeping the people in ignorance or filching their pockets under the pretense of preaching the Gospel or anything else; but its object shall be the cleansing and blessing of the people, and it shall be so clear and plain that every man can understand it. "No lion shall be there"; that is to say, no monstrous beast, such as czars, beastly governments, oppressing corporations, or ecclesiastical, political or financial systems. "Nor any ravenous beast [government of oppressive violence] shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there." The earth and everything in it shall be made conducive to the uplifting and blessing of mankind.

Having in mind, then, that the Apostle assures us time and again that Jesus ransomed the entire human race, *all* of them, the prophet continues: "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return [meaning they shall return from the land of the enemy, from death and from their bondage in blindness and ignorance and superstition], and come to Zion [the Messiah] with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away". (Isaiah 35) Indeed then all shall know the truth of the message that the angel brought to the shepherds as they watched their flocks—good tidings of great joy unto all.

Messiah's kingdom will establish a universal peace. As the prophet declares, when his kingdom is established, then the nations shall come and say, "Let us go up to the mountain [kingdom] of the Lord, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. . . . And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid".—Micah 4:1-4.

To assure such a lasting blessing will require, of course, nothing short of a perfect ruler. Then the earth will have such, for "the government shall be upon his [Messiah's] shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, [Life-giver], The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end".—Isaiah 9: 6, 7.

To the Christian, therefore, who has a clear vision of the divine plan and who appreciates the time through which the world is now passing this should be the happiest Christmas he has ever spent, because by the eye of faith he can see the Sun of Righteousness rising with healing in its beams, driving back the great dark night of suffering, tumult and trouble, preparatory to the healing, blessing and uplifting of the human race, back to the perfection of life, liberty and happiness. The incoming of this glorious time means the beginning of the Golden Age—a time of rejoicing for all who love righteousness.

Juvenile Bible Study

MAN'S highest duty and privilege is to glorify God. One who loves and obeys the great Creator loves and obeys righteousness, makes a better citizen and a greater benefactor to mankind. To love and obey Jehovah one must know him. How can we know him except through his Word, and how can we know and understand his Word unless we are taught? If it is proper and necessary to send our children to the public schools that they there may be taught concerning the selfish things of this life, with stronger reasoning is it proper and necessary that they be taught concerning the things that have to do with their eternal welfare and happiness.

The Biblical education of children, we believe, has been sadly neglected. Every parent owes a duty to his own child and a corresponding duty to every other child to whom he can render aid. In view of the time of great stress now upon the human race, is it not high time that we take some positive action toward the instruction of the children concerning the greatest thing about which they should know, the Word of God? We believe that all parents, whether Christian or not, desire to see their children grow up in righteousness and truth. Because of the long-felt need in behalf of the children, THE GOLDEN

AGE inaugurates a children's Bible study department. There is no desire or purpose to teach the doctrines of any sect or system; but the sole purpose is to instruct the children in the Bible. To do so we have arranged this study in question and answer form, propounding the questions and briefly answering, citing the Scriptures where the proper Biblical answer may be had. We suggest that the parents propound these questions to their children and aid them to locate in the Bible the answer, thus familiarizing the child (and incidentally the parent) with the texts of the Bible and enabling them to get some insight into the glorious character of Jehovah and the Lord Jesus.

We suggest that the child be given one question each day and that in addition to the answer here given, it be encouraged to look up the Scriptures cited and any other Scriptures that, with the aid of the parent, it might find bearing on the question. As this is a primary study, we therefore begin with the subject

THE BIBLE

1. What is meant by the word Bible?

Answer: A book that contains the Word of God as expressed to man, and has reference to all the sixty-six books collectively, contained in what is commonly accepted as the Holy Scriptures.

2. What is the Bible?

Answer: It is an expression of God's will toward man and an outline of his plan concerning the human race, given for man's instruction.—John 17:17; 2 Corinthians 4:2.

3. Are we invited to study the Bible?

Answer: Yes; Jehovah says to us: "Come, now, let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18); and "Study to show thyself approved unto God".—2 Timothy 2:15; John 5:39; Deuteronomy 29:29; Revelation 1:3; 1 Peter 3:15.

4. Should we expect to understand the deep things in the Bible?

Answer: If we study it with a reverential and prayerful desire we may understand them. "The reverence of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Proverbs 1:7) The plan of God is a secret which he has promised to reveal to those who reverentially seek to understand it. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his plan."—Psalm 25:14; 1 Corinthians 2:10.

5. Can everybody understand the Bible?

Answer: They could, if everyone would com-

Our Great Creator's Unspeakable Gift

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."—2 Corinthians 9:15.

THERE is an appropriateness in the general good cheer of the Christmas season. The custom of giving tokens of love and friendship prevails wherever the story of Jesus has gone. Surely this is just as it should be. While some may have been injured by receiving bounties, but few, if any, have been other than blest in the giving of them. Herein we see corroborated our Savior's words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive". In proportion as we attain Godlikeness, in proportion as the spirit of Christ dwells richly in us, in proportion as we possess the holy spirit, in that same proportion shall we appreciate more and more our Lord's statement.

In our dealings with God it is necessary that we realize our dependence, our own insufficiency, and His greatness and beneficence; and that we learn to go to Him as His "dear children", to whom He delights to give His favors, and who receive them and appreciate them with gratitude of heart. In every sense of the word we are debtors to God and always shall be. We can never dispute the obligations under which His mercy and loving kindness have placed us. The sooner we realize this fact, the better will it be for us. Some possessed with a false pride declare that they ask no favors from God or man—that they pay their way and wish always to do so. As respects our dealings with our fellowmen, something of this spirit is praiseworthy; but the entire proposition is inconsistent with our relationship with the Almighty.

As we did not create ourselves, neither can we maintain our being, as the Scriptures assert: "In Him we live and move and have our being". (John 1:12) This would have been true of us whether born on an angelic plane or as perfect human beings; for we could not have created ourselves, directly or indirectly. Through the arrangements of His providence in nature, God was responsible for our birth; and He is the Provider for His creatures on every plane. The fact that He causes His sun to shine upon the just and the unjust, and sends His rain upon the evil as well as upon the good, and thus provides for the world of mankind that in general is in rebellion against Him and His authority, does not prove that the laws of nature are autocratic.

Rather, as the Scriptures show, these mercies of God scattered broadcast tell of a provision on our Creator's part for the necessities of His creatures. That He allows these laws to be interfered with at the present time and permits adverse conditions upon our race He fully explains to be because of its sinful, rebellious attitude, because the sentence, the curse of death, has been justly pronounced against mankind, and because He sees a way by which present lessons of adversity and tribulation may be made instructive as respects "the exceeding sinfulness of sin".

"All Taught of God"

Two of the great lessons for us to learn are (1) our complete dependence upon God and (2) His loving kindness and tender mercies over all His works. But these lessons can be learned only from one standpoint and by one class. Those who view matters from the outside only will surely misunderstand, misinterpret, many of the operations of divine providence.

"The secret of the Lord is with them that reverence him and he will show them his covenant"—His future plans, His agreement. (Psalm 25:14) In order to see, to understand, to appreciate them we must accept certain matters by faith: (1) "that he is"—that there is an Almighty Creator; (2) "that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him". (Hebrews 11:6) Seeking the Lord diligently, we find in the Bible that which commends it to our hearts as well as to our heads.

But right here we are beset by a danger and a difficulty; for while it is possible to receive great assistance from fellow-believers in the understanding of the divine Word, yet there is much danger of our becoming even more confused by such assistance—by the creeds and theories of men, particularly those handed down from the dark ages. Whatever, therefore, we receive from men we must accept tentatively—for examination, for proving and testing by the Word of God. Thus we "try the spirits," or doctrines, as the Apostle admonishes. (1 John 4:1) Thus we permit God to be His own interpreter and to make the matter plain to us. Those teachers who refer to the Word of God,

who point out to us its harmony with itself and with reason, giving the citations and showing the relationship between text and context—these are the teachers who are really helpful. All others are apt to be injurious, whether they address us orally or in print.

"Every Good and Perfect Gift"

Only after we have been for some time in the School of Christ can we comprehend the force of the Apostle's words, "Every good and perfect gift is from above". (James 1:17) Then we begin to look about to find some of these good and perfect gifts. We soon find many gifts and blessings, but very few of them perfect, purely good. Everything connected with our present condition is imperfect. Even the sunshine and the rain, which are common to all God's creatures, are evidently not furnished under perfect conditions. Imperfection seems to be written upon everything we have, as well as upon ourselves.

The Bible explanation of this state of affairs is that, while God's work is perfect (Deuteronomy 32:4), our race today are not really samples of His workmanship, but are depraved, fallen, imperfect through the original sin of Father Adam and its entailed weaknesses and blemishes upon his posterity. The good and perfect gifts of God are to be seen only by the eye of faith—only by those whose eyes of understanding have been opened to see by faith Jesus, the great Redeemer. By faith this class see accomplished in God's due time His great work of Redemption, the wiping away of all tears from off all faces and the re-establishment of perfect life conditions, such as God has promised.

Those whose eyes of understanding have to some extent been opened see more and more of the riches of God's grace, and appreciate more and more all of His gifts and favors, especially the great gift, the unspeakable gift, mentioned in our text. What this gift is the entire Scriptures set forth in various presentations. Of these statements one of the most forceful is St. Paul's declaration, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord".—Romans 6:23.

A Gift Not Appreciated

False theologies have diverted or taken away from the Bible statements that eternal life is the gift of God, and that He will supply it only

to those in fullest harmony with Himself. False theologies have taught us that eternal life is a natural quality—yea, that it is a persistent one, that not even God Himself can destroy our lives or being. This erroneous thought has distorted all our reasonings, and has left the issue as between an eternal life in torture or an eternal life in bliss. But the Scriptures clearly define a different issue; namely, as between extinction, destruction, and a life in harmony with God, a life which Divine Love and Mercy had provided for those who are in accord with the Almighty.

Let us hearken to the testimony of our Lord, the Apostles and the Prophets on this subject, and see that God is now proffering the church a gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us note the Scriptural proposition that if we are willfully, deliberately, intelligently, rejecting this gift it will be withdrawn, and that the effect upon us will be the second death, everlasting oblivion, from which God offers no hope of recovery.

Let us note that this is the general dealing of God; and hence that when His time shall come for dealing with the world of mankind in general, during the Millennial age, the offer then to be made to them will be a similar proposition of life or death everlasting. Those who will accept God's gift upon God's terms are welcome to it. He is pleased to give it to them. Those who will then reject it shall die the second death.—Acts 3:22, 23.

"Through Jesus Christ our Lord," is the Apostle's statement. The gift is not offered to us by the Father directly, but indirectly through the Son. To those whose eyes of understanding have been opened, the Apostles says, "This is the record, that God has given unto us eternal life; and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (1 John 4:12) Other Scriptures inform us that this life is merely reckoned to the church now, and that they will not get it until they shall experience the change of the first resurrection, at the second coming of our Lord. Of these it is written, "Your life is hid with Christ in God". (Colossians 3:3) Thus every suggestion of God's gift is bound up similarly in Christ. Only as we become united to Him, related to Him, can we have this unspeakable gift of God. Hence it is not improper that we should sometimes both think and speak of Jesus Himself as being

The Unspeakable Gift

Both Jesus and the eternal life which the Father has provided through Him are unspeakable in the sense that it is impossible for us to present fully to others the richness and the glory which inhere in both. Who can describe life eternal on either a spirit plane or as restored and perfected humanity? It is beyond all the powers of our mental comprehension. Even the thought of it can only be imperfectly communicated and imperfectly grasped. It must gradually dawn upon us, grow upon us in appreciation and comprehension. Similarly the wealth of grace divine represented in our Lord Jesus is unspeakable. We cannot tell it; and the natural man cannot receive of the things of the Spirit of God, neither know them.—1 Corinthians 2:14.

Only those who are especially favored of God can get even the first glimpse of the riches of God's grace in Christ. If this glimpse be appreciated, it leads to clearer and still clearer views; all who will appreciate either our Lord Jesus or the gift of life must be "taught of God". (John 6:54) As our Redeemer said to St. Peter, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father in Heaven" (Matthew 16:17), so all who could grasp spiritual things must be taught. All our teaching and preaching cannot overcome the blindness of the natural fallen mind in respect to God's gift and the channel through which it comes.

Only as the Heavenly Father shall grant His blessing may fruits to our labors be expected. As is written, "As many as the Lord your God shall call," and; "No man can come unto me except the Father who sent me draw him." (John 6:39; John 6:44) Hence we see that our present appreciation of divine goodness implies three things: (1) the divine provision of eternal life, (2) Christ the channel, and (3) the knowledge by which we are enabled to appreciate both the gift and the channel.

Receiving and Rejecting God's Gift

As we look out over the world and perceive 1,000,000 in heathen darkness and the remaining 400,000,000 of nominal Christendom in a dull foggy light of superstition and ignorance, our first thought might be that the world in general has rejected God's gift and hence has sealed its doom for the second death. Then we

find relief in the Scriptural assurance that the present world-wide darkness is the result of Adam's sin and condemnation to death; that, although Christ has come and offered His sacrifice for sin, and thus made possible the removal of the curse and the bringing back of Adam and all of his race to harmony with God and to the possibility of accepting His gift of eternal life upon His terms, nevertheless the offer of this opportunity to the race in general is still future.

How glad we are that in God's due time all the blind eyes shall be opened, all the deaf ears unstopped, and the fogs of superstition and error all flee away before the rising of the Sun of Righteousness—the glories of the Millennial kingdom!

The few who now see and appreciate God's gift are indeed, as the Scriptures declare, a "little flock" (Luke 12:32); and although generally disowned by men, and "counted fools for Christ's sake," they are rich in that they have become, in advance of the world, the recipients of God's favor by faith. Even now they may think of themselves as being possessors of life eternal—because of their joy and confidence in Him who has promised.

There is a superlative blessing of eternal life on the spirit plane, "far above angels, principalities and powers". Those who attain that blessing will indeed be "partakers of the divine nature". (2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2) Surely "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him". (1 Corinthians 2:9) Those who have now accepted Christ as their Redeemer and their Bridegroom possess also all the riches of God's grace that center in Him; and when He shall appear, they shall be made like Him, sharers in His glory. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!"

Gifts to the Church

God's time has not yet come for giving the gifts of the Redeemer's sacrifice to the world. The distribution to the world of mankind of those blessings is held in abeyance, waiting for the glorious thousand-year day—earth's jubilee. Meantime God has been preparing for a special class of humanity other gifts, the richness and value of which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man".

God has a right to give different gifts to His different creatures. He has given to the angels the gifts, blessings, which cause their everlasting happiness; and now He is selecting from amongst men by various trials, tests, a very special class—a saintly class, of all nations and denominations. While He calls all perfect intelligent beings (angelic and human) “sons of God”, He purposes that the saintly ones now being selected shall be His sons on a still higher plane, to which Jesus has been exalted as a reward for His obedience—“far above angels, principalities and powers and every name that is named”.

To such of these as respond to the drawings and leadings and tests, God is giving special gifts at the present time—not earthly gifts, tangible and seen of men, but spiritual gifts—new hearts of appreciation, new eyes of understanding, new ears of comprehension, new powers of spiritual enjoyment. To them “old things are passed away, and all things have become new”.—2 Corinthians 5:17.

The Most Helpful Gifts

Give without hoping for gifts in return—every gift at this season should be a love token. We value the gift not so much for its monetary worth as because of the love and fellowship of which it is a reminder. It is eminently proper that friends and parents should prepare gifts for others in secret, and keep them until the opportune time for presentation. In all this they are merely copying the Heavenly Father, who is thus preparing for the world the wonderful gifts of the Messianic Kingdom, described as “a feast of fat things for all people”.

But there are other gifts which should not be kept back merely for Christmas time. Each one and especially each Christian, should every day send forth on life's pathway gifts and blessings that would bring joy, cheer, to many hearts—the kindly word, the nod of recognition, especially to one in less favored circumstances, the kindly look, the word or act of sympathy. Oh, how much these gifts mean to the poor world, whom the Apostle Paul describes as the groaning creation! Many of them have little that they know how to enjoy in the present life, and no prospect beyond. How blank such lives! What a godly pleasure comes from casting upon them an occasional ray of sunshine!

“More Blessed To Give”

God Himself is the great pattern set before us in His Word. In proportion as we have received of God's gift and have appreciated it, in that same proportion are we privileged to be so “taught of God” as to become more and more like Him in spirit, disposition—desirous of giving—generous. Since man was created in the image and likeness of God, all men would have possessed this generous disposition had it not been for the fall of Adam; and we find that the fall has especially blighted some in one particular and others in another. Hence amongst “natural men” there are some who are generous, and who to that degree have perhaps more Godlikeness than have some of the children of grace—especially until the latter have been trained in the School of Christ.

For we are to remember that God's message and His drawing power affect the less honorable of mankind. (1 Corinthians 1:26-29) Thus opportunity is afforded for the Lord to demonstrate the power of His grace in the transformation of character. But so surely as we have become God's children, recipients of His blessing and of the instruction of the School of Christ, this quality of benevolence will grow in us; and the more ripe we become as Christians, the more it will abound in our thoughts, words and deeds. But any other condition, any failure to progress, any turning toward greater selfishness, would be sure signs that we are faced in the wrong direction, that we are walking after the flesh, not after the spirit.

Thousands on thousands in the world are needy; and those possessed of the Lord's spirit will feel an intense desire to give to these. But here the difficulty arises. What lines shall we draw? We answer that as comparing spiritual and temporal gifts we should prefer to give the higher, the spiritual, wherever we have opportunity—not forgetting the other, however, as occasion may demand or opportunity offer.

Since the judgment of each will be according to his light, it follows that many more can appreciate the privilege of giving earthly blessings, comforts, succor, solace, etc., than can understand the still higher privilege of giving heavenly gifts, blessings, counsel, succor, consolation, comfort. Whoever, therefore, has spiritual ability to give further spiritual favors should rejoice to thus engage in blessing others.

Great Joy for All People Coming Soon

(A CHRISTMAS SERMON BY THE LATE PASTOR RUSSELL)

"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day in the City of Bethlehem a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."— Luke 2:10,11.

Great joy to all people? Did God send that message by the angels? Can we believe it implicitly? If so, it tells us of the most momentous change conceivable in human conditions. Of the present the poet has truthfully said:

"Now the world is full of suffering,
Sounds of woe fall on my ears,
Sights of wretchedness and sorrow
Fill my eyes with pitying tears.
'Tis the earth's dark night of weeping;
Wrong and evil triumph now;
I can wait, for just before me
Beams the morning's roseate glow."

This is in full agreement with the prophetic declaration, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning". (Psalm 30:5) The question is not as respects the weeping and the night, the reign of darkness, of sin, or death. This is fact—not imagination, not speculation. Even those most favorably situated share with the world in general the condition which the Apostle describes, saying, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together . . . waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Romans 8:22,19), waiting for the morning of the new and better day referred to by the angels and by all the prophets and apostles, as well as by our Redeemer. What interests us in this connection is the promised escape from present conditions to those of joy, happiness and blessing. Whoever can heartily believe the angelic message will surely agree that it is good tidings—a message of peace on earth and good will to men. But show us how it can be brought about, and when. Prove the matter to us, not only Scripturally, but demonstrate it logically, for it is contrary to all that we have ever been taught or ever believed, and it seems too good to be true.

Dear friends, I address you as Christian believers, pupils in the School of Christ, students of the Lord's Word, and remind you that not only all creation is groaning, but that the Apostle includes us and all believers in the matter, saying, "Ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves, groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body," the Body of

Christ. (Romans 8:23) We have indeed a faith which the world has not—a message of peace and fellowship of spirit with the Lord, and, many of us, also a communion with saints: but blessed as these divine favors are, they leave much to be desired, and we groan, waiting for the glorious consummation—the conditions which are to be ours in the Resurrection morning.

THE CAUSE OF OUR GROANING

In order to appreciate the Bible explanation of how the relief and joy are coming to the world, we must note these declarations respecting the cause and source of our tribulations. Nowhere is the matter so beautifully and thoroughly summed up as in the Apostle's statement, "By one man's disobedience sin entered into the world, and death as the result of sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned". (Romans 5:12) That explanation shows the entire situation. We perceive that sin has gotten hold of our race; has blemished its organism; has more or less defiled its every member. And we perceive that death is its natural outworking or penalty, and that all of our sorrows and troubles and weaknesses, mental, moral, and physical, are the results of this dying process, which is operating in us. The Scriptural explanation that the entire matter in its start in weakness, original sin, was in Eden, with our first parents, is logical. We perceive exactly how these blemishes have been conveyed from parent to child with increasing force and virulence. Thus we confirm the statement that we were "born in sin and shapen in iniquity; in sin did our mothers conceive us," and that there is none righteous from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet.

As a race we are unable to justify ourselves before God, for, as the Apostle declares, "We cannot do the things that we would", for "there is none righteous, no, not one," in the absolute sense. (Romans 3:10) We see, then, that our Creator determined not to sympathize with, nor encourage, nor permit sin, but to destroy it.

His work has operated along the lines of justice, in sentencing us to death and in holding to that sentence for now six thousand years.

CAN DIVINE SENTENCE ALTER?

Is it supposable that the unchangeable God will change? Surely not! What then is there as a basis for hope, since He has already decreed us unworthy of life—worthy of destruction—death? Does not justice rule in all of the divine dealings? Could God violate this element of His character, of which we read, "Justice is the foundation of his throne"? We must assent that God cannot change. But the Scriptures reveal to us another of God's attributes coming to our relief—His love. We inquire with deepest interest, Is it possible for God's love to triumph over His justice? We answer, No, the divine attributes are so perfectly coördinated that one cannot trample upon another. Human wisdom might here drop the matter as hopeless, but the divine plan shows us to the contrary — that divine love provided for the satisfaction of justice, by a sacrifice and corresponding price. To our astonishment, the Scriptures hold up our Lord, "The man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all; to be testified in due time". (1 Timothy 2:5, 6) Now we begin to see that our all-wise and all-just Creator, in the fulness of His love, provided for the satisfaction of His own justice, and thus provided for the relief of our race, and for the fulfillment of our text, that ultimately great joy should come to all people, through Messiah's sacrifice.

But would it be just to lay the penalty of Adam's sin upon a substitute? Would it be just to cause the innocent to suffer for the guilty? Ah, yes! That course would be unjust. But that is not the divine program. On the contrary, divine wisdom set before the Redeemer a great prize and rich reward if He would undertake the sacrifice incidental to our deliverance from the power of sin and death. Jesus did this. As we read, "Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God". (Hebrews 12:2) The Apostle, telling us of the sacrifice, assures us that He voluntarily left the glory which He had with the Father, was made flesh, and gave Himself as the "propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world".—1 John 2:2.

The Apostle assures us further that He who

was rich became poor for our sakes, voluntarily, and has now been gloriously rewarded in part, for His faithfulness to the Father's will. He notes how Jesus humbled Himself, even unto the death of the cross, and then adds, "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father".—Philippians 2:9-11.

JUSTICE, WISDOM, LOVE, POWER

These are the fundamental divine attributes. The first three have been exhibited to us in operation. We wonder and adore divine justice, unchangeable; divine wisdom, inscrutable; divine love, immeasurable. What remains, therefore, is to see the final demonstration of divine power in action. A sample of it was given us by our Lord, when He awakened Lazarus from the sleep of death, as showing further the glories of His coming kingdom—the divine kingdom. Divine power is still more manifest in our Lord's own resurrection, His "change" from earthly to heavenly condition. "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye". (1 Corinthians 15:52) The work of this gospel age, the selection of the church from amongst mankind, demonstrates further the justice, wisdom, love and power of God; but the power still waits for a full development. If that element of the divine character shall prevail, it will indeed mean what our text declares, that "great joy shall be to all people".

Love divine has sought the world and bought it with the precious sacrifice of our Redeemer. Adam was the transgressor, and all his race suffer in consequence. Jesus Christ redeemed father Adam, and in so doing, redeemed all of his family and all of his inheritance. Our glorious Lord purposes to take the place of Adam and to adopt all of his children, if they will, and to give them back again all that was lost in their father Adam. We must remember that, no matter what our plane of birth, no matter how deep our degradation, our rights, as the children of Adam, were the perfect human rights, had those not been forfeited by his disobedience. Consequently the restoration which our Redeemer purposes is not merely a restoring to each individual of the things which he

once possessed, but a restitution of all that was his by right under the original divine arrangement, if Adam had not sinned. Hallelujah! What a Savior! "Able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him." (Hebrews 7:25) So surely as the divine program has thus been carried out, exhibiting God's justice and wisdom and love, so surely the remainder of the divine program will follow, and demonstrate divine power.

WHY SO LONG A DELAY?

With a haste which properly belongs to our short-lived and dying condition, we wonder why divine power has not made greater haste in the deliverance of Adam and his race from the bondage of sin and death—why Messiah, after purchasing the world and the fulness thereof, has not made haste to take possession of it, but has permitted the reign of sin and death to continue, and has permitted Satan still to be the god of this world and the deceiver of men.

The Scriptures give the only answer. They tell us that, from the divine standpoint, the six thousand years of the reign of sin and death are a short time in God's sight—that a thousand years in God's sight are but as yesterday, and that we are to have patience and faith. They show us that the divine command was to multiply and fill the earth, and that this work has been much more rapidly accomplished under the reign of sin and death than it would have been otherwise, and that thus God has provided by now a sufficient number of Adam's race to fill the whole earth. They show us further that these have all had some lessons and experiences along the line of sin and death, and will, thereby, be prepared for the lessons on the side of righteousness, the lessons which God purposes they shall have in the future, when the Redeemer shall fulfill His promise and call them forth from the tomb, the prison-house of death.

An example of the operation was granted to us when our Lord called to his friend Lazarus, who was dead, "Lazarus, come forth"—and the dead came forth. He was not alive. He was dead, or, from the divine standpoint of speaking of things which are not yet accomplished, as though they were, he was asleep, just as Stephen was asleep when he was stoned to death, and as the good and bad of all the past are said to be asleep with their fathers.

Another particular reason for the delay of the establishment of Messiah's kingdom and the blessing of the world which He redeemed is that there is another feature of the divine purpose, namely, the selecting, or electing, of a "little flock" to be the church of Christ, His bride and joint-heir in His kingdom glory and Millennial work. The type or pattern of this church was Israel in the flesh and the overcomers of that time, briefly mentioned by the Apostle in Hebrews 11. They are to have a special reward and share in the services of the future. They, however, were not invited to be members of the bride class, the selection of which began at Pentecost and will, we believe, very soon be completed, when the last one of them shall have been accepted, found faithful, chiseled and polished, and made ready for the kingdom glory, into which they will be ushered by the power of the first resurrection. "So also is the resurrection of the dead; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." (1 Corinthians 15:42, 44) "And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had they received his mark upon their foreheads, nor in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."—Rev. 20:4.

JOY IN THE MORNING

That time is Scripturally designated the "morning" of the New Dispensation. The picture is carried out by telling us that now darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the heathen, but that in due time the light of divine glory shall arise. Meantime the Lord's faithful must walk by faith and not by sight, and the Father's Word of promise must be the lamp to their pathway, the light of their footsteps, even as a "lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn".—2 Peter 1:19.

Our Lord Himself is styled the "Sun of Righteousness", which shall arise with healing restitution in His beams. (Malachi 4:2) And in one of His parables our Lord represents His church, which is also to be with Him the "Sun of Righteousness", which is to return and refresh the world. He describes the future glory of the garnered wheat of this gospel age, saying, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father". (Matthew 13:43) The results will be the scattering of

the ignorance and superstition and darkness of sin, which now prevails, and the enlightenment of all mankind.

A further guarantee of the blessing of that time is given us in the assurance that one of the first works of our Lord, in respect to the establishment of His kingdom, will be the binding of Satan. The Apostle says, "And he laid hold on Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be finished". How careful our Lord is to prove to us how every detail of that glorious plan has been worked out, and that nothing shall fail! He assures us as follows: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it". (Isaiah 55:11) And if our faith be lame, He assures our hearts, saying, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts".—Isaiah 55:9.

"GREAT JOY TO ALL PEOPLE"

Our Lord said, "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted". (Matthew 5:4) So if we find that the great majority of mankind have had considerable experience in mourning and sorrow, under the reign of sin and death, there is comfort in the thought that the same large majority of the race shall be comforted, shall receive joy. All will have the opportunity of coming to this estate of joy, promised for all who were redeemed by the precious blood. And the promised "times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began," will be world-wide in their influence. All except the church will share in that glorious restitution blessing. And the faithful of the church will have, before then, received their full Father's blessing, through the "change" of

nature from human to divine. "Behold, I show you a mystery," says the Apostle, "we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye".—1 Corinthians 15:51,52.

The restitution work will begin immediately with the generation living at that time — following the great time of trouble, which the Scriptures declare will usher in the Millennium. As soon as order and blessing shall be established in the world, under that glorious kingdom or dominion, invisible to men except through its agents or channels, then will begin the awakening of the sleeping millions—gradually. The last will be first, so that the first Adam will probably be the last to be awakened. But their awakening will be for the purpose of bringing them to an accurate knowledge of God, His justice, wisdom, love and power, to the intent that, if they will be rightly exercised in obedience to Christ, the great Mediator between God and men, they will gradually regain the perfection lost by original sin and, if they become careless, they will receive stripes, chastisements, that by these judgments of the Lord, they may finally regain all that was lost. Their joys will be increasing with every step taken on the return journey back from sin and death to perfection of life. The joy will be unto all people, yet there is the intimation that some will reject the divine favor. As it is written, "And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people".—Acts 3:23.

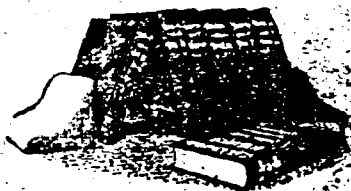
Thus enlightened by the divine message, our hearts will undoubtedly be drawn nearer and nearer to the Fountain of all Grace and our lives will be all sunshine. Let us not only put off the works of darkness, but put off all that pertains to the darkness and error, and be clothed in garments of lights, and give

"Praise to him by whose kind favor
Heavenly Truth has reached our ears;
May its sweet, reviving savor
Fill our hearts and calm our fears."

CHRISTMAS 1921

Spirit of Christmas, the whole world is waiting.
Waiting and longing for Christ and for you.
Song of the angels, oh! banish all hating;
Peace and good will ring, O joy-bells, ring true!
Spread the glad tidings, the new day is dawning.
Lift up your heads, all ye saints, and rejoice.
Glory to God in the highest! 'Tis morning.
Praise Him, oh! praise Him with heart and with voice.
—Agnes Nourse.

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promised by Jehovah to "all the families of the earth". See Genesis 12:1-3; 22:15-18; 26:2-5; 28:11-14.

13. *Why should the standing up of Michael (Christ — Daniel 12:1) or the taking of His power to begin His reign (Revelation 11:17, 18), cause such a great time of trouble?*

Ans.: Satan is "the god of [god means mighty one] this world" [the present order or arrangement of things]. He was also called by Jesus "the prince of this world". (John 14:30) "The god of this world" [Satan] does not desire to have his kingdom taken from him; so he is resisting at every step the forward march of the new King of earth. In the Revised Version, Revelation 11:15 reads: "The kingdom [not kingdoms] of this world is become [becoming] the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ", etc. The kingdoms are really one kingdom, the kingdom of Satan, just as the new kingdom will be one kingdom, the kingdom of Christ.

14. *How will those days of trouble be shortened?*

Ans.: The answer is found in Revelation 20:1-3, where it is shown that Satan will be bound for a thousand years (during the reign of Christ over the earth) by "an angel come down from heaven"—by Christ come to earth. When Satan is bound, the trouble stops; for he is the great trouble-maker. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."—Revelation 21:4.

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ns.: "Christ in you [the church class] the hope of the church"—Colossians 1:27.

2. *What is meant by the word "Christ"?*

ns.: It means anointed.

3. *Was Jesus anointed of the holy spirit, and do the church class receive the same anointing?*

ns.: Yes; Jesus was anointed of God (Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38), and also the church.—2 Corinthians 1:21 • 1 John 2:27.

4. *Then, in plain language, what is this great mystery that St. Paul is speaking of?*

Ans.: It is that the promised seed (the great deliv-

erer) is not a single individual or person, but "many" (1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27); that God's dear Son "is the Head of the body [the body of the Christ], the church" (Colossians 1:18), and that all who are Christ's are "Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise" to bless all families and nations of the earth. See Galatians 3:8, 16, 29; Genesis 12:3; 22:18.

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CHRISTMAS CAROL

It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth
To touch their harps of gold;
"Peace on earth, good will to men,
From heaven's all-gracious King",
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its Babel sounds
The blessed angels sing.

But with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;

And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song which they bring:
Oh, hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing!

And ye beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow,
Look now! for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing:
Oh, rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing!

For lo! the days are hastening on,
By prophet-bards foretold,
When with the ever-circling years
Comes round the age of gold;
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendors fling
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.

HOLLANDISH HYMN, Number 160

[This hymn, translated for THE GOLDEN AGE, is sung by the Hollandish people on the night of each December 31st]

Hours, days, months, and years,
Swiftly as the shadows go;
Ah, we find upon our pathway
Naught that's lasting here below.
In the way that we must traverse,
Scarce a footprint e'er remains,
Only on the soul the present
Leaves its blessings or its stains.

Generations languish earthward,
And we bloom upon their graves;
And in time our children mourn us—
Fallen, like the autumn leaves.
Dust, that ages slow have gathered,
Nests with us the same grave;
Without Thee, Eternal Father,
Ah, who could our being save?

Though Thou turnedst to destruction,
Still Thy grace forsakes us not,
Heavenly light shines round about us,
Glory is Thy children's lot.
'Neath Thy loving care and guidance
All the weary, dying way
Leads us, as Thy Word hath spoken,
To the full and perfect Day.

Neither weal nor woe can harm me,
Neither grief nor chastening rod,
Thou art ever left to cheer me,
Thou'rt eternally my God.
Whate'er sorrow here may threaten,
Unto Thee for rest I go;
Thou art, through Thy Son, my Father,
Spite of changes, spite of woe.

Father, still, in all my sorrows,
Father, though in shade or sun,
Father, in the Vale of Shadow,
Father, too, when death has won.
Though on earth is naught but changing,
Thou, O God, dost faithful stand;
E'en my soul rests in Thy mercy,
Slumbers in Thy Father-hand.

Haste then, years, haste freely onward,
With your sunlight and your pain,
What of grief ye bring upon me,
Mine is peace that shall remain.
Though all else on earth should fail me,
Onward led by Thy dear hand,
Bright, beyond our mean existence
Shines my heavenly Fatherland.

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