



Assembly Testimony



Down from His Glory

*Down from His glory, ever living story,
My God and Saviour came, and Jesus was His Name,
Born in a manger, to His own a stranger,
A man of sorrows, tears and agony.*

Chorus:

*Oh! how I love Him; how I adore Him;
My breath, my Sunshine, my all in all.
The Great Creator became my Saviour,
And all God's fulness dwelleth in Him.*

*What condescension! bringing us redemption,
That in the dead of night, not one faint hope in sight,
God, gracious, tender, laid aside His splendour,
Stooping to woo, to win, to save my soul.*

*Without reluctance, flesh and blood His substance,
He took the form of man, revealed the hidden plan.
Oh! glorious mystery, Sacrifice of Calvary,
And now I know Thou art the great "I am".*

*by W. G. Booth-Clibbon.
"Victory Songs", No 4.*

THE LORD'S RETURN—IMMINENT "AT HAND"

by Wm. Bunting, Belfast.

THE return of our Lord Jesus Christ is a vital, absolutely imperative fact. Having shown in our last paper that this is so, I wish further to show that it is imminent. What, however, do I mean exactly when I say that the Lord's coming again is imminent? The imminence of His return signifies at least three great facts. The first is that we are quite uncertain of the precise time of His coming. The second is that no known event foretold in Scripture, must occur before His coming. His returning, is the next great event in God's plan. The third fact is that He may come at any moment of time. In corroboration of this last point, let me say that five times in the New Testament we read that the Lord is "at hand", and that in His final message from heaven's throne, He three times repeated the words, "I ^{will} come (literally, "I am coming") quickly". There you have imminency. It was in view of such Scriptures as these that Dr. Andrew Bonar said: "I hear the twittering, twittering, twittering of the birds, and I wait to hear the trumpet break in upon their song". Surely if we are at all observant we have been impressed by the fact that we are living in momentous times, in which one international crisis follows another in rapid succession. The truth is we are living in times unparalleled in world history. The sun seems to be setting upon our much boasted civilisation; and many intelligent, informed men, are convinced that the world is presently moving to the most dramatic and crucial event in its long and chequered history. This event will be a crisis of unprecedented magnitude, even the coming again in glory and splendour of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Have no illusion about the future. He who hung upon the tree, who lay in the tomb, and who now sits upon heaven's throne as a Prince and a Saviour, will come, punish the wicked and rule supreme, from pole to pole.

At this point, I must repeat something which I have already mentioned, namely that we are quite uncertain of the date of His coming again. Our Lord Himself has said, "but of that day and of that hour knoweth no man, no, nor the angels which are in heaven" (Mark 13.32). No man, no angel, no created intelligence, however exalted, knows the date of His return. That is a secret which God has locked up in His own mind. "Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh." He will come when men look not for Him. His coming will be a dreadful surprise for the ungodly. Some day, some night, while men follow their normal pursuits, unheralded, and unwanted by the poor world, He will come. The folly of trying to fix the date of our Lord's return should, therefore, be obvious to all. Strange to say, and yet I suppose, not strange, many from early times have attempted to do so, in spite of

our Lord's own words. There was great expectation and all Europe rang with the news in the sixth century that Christ would come in the year 581. But He did not come. As the year 1000 approached, apprehension amounted to a general panic. So enthusiastic was the interest, that many people in different quarters left their homes and all their earthly belongings and travelled to Palestine to welcome His return upon the Mount of Olives. But, of course, nothing happened. In more recent times, Wm. Miller set the date in 1843 and Mr. Snow corrected him and said that October 22, 1848 was the positive day. A German predicted the advent would take place in 1866 and another German claimed that it would be in 1872. Mr. J. B. Dimbly, astronomer royal, aroused great and widespread interest by the forecast that the times of the Gentiles would end on Good Friday, 1898. In 1897, Michael Baxter, a clergyman, proclaimed that the 144,000 redeemed of Revelation 14 would ascend to heaven on the 12th day of March, 1903. Russell, leader of the Russelites, claimed that Gentile powers would be overthrown in 1914. But in that very year, the greatest struggle for Gentile domination in all history began. Dr. Gratian Guinness, after making careful calculations, said that the times of the Gentiles would end in 1934. And Mr. R. T. Nash, in the "Midnight Hour" magazine, also fixed the year of 1934 as one of prophetic crisis. Then, Mr. Long, a clergyman of California, prophesied that Christ would come in 1945. Great fear fell on many in India because of the eastern astrologers' prediction that the world would end in February, 1962. These are a few of the guesses which have demonstrated the folly of men but which alas, have brought the blessed truth of the Second Advent into much disrepute. Thank God, our faith does not rest upon the shifting sands of human speculations, but on the sure and impregnable rock of Holy Scripture.

While our Lord warns us of the utter futility of date fixing, I wish you to observe that on the other hand He has plainly told us that we are not to be ignorant of the special features of the time period in which He will return. When He came the first time, He upbraided the people saying, "Can ye not discern the signs of the time?" and, speaking of the future times and seasons, Paul says "Ye brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief" (I Thess. 5.4). Obviously, therefore, we are to have an intelligent understanding of the world conditions which will obtain as the end approaches. We are not to allow our minds to be prejudiced against His authoritative word because these datemongers have spoken without warrant or scriptural sanction. The fact, however, that we are not to be ignorant of the signs of the times does not mean that we are to look for signs. No, we look, not for signs, but for our returning Lord, Himself. We do not look *for* signs, but the Master expects us to look *at* the signs, because they betoken the times in which we live.

Now, there is a distinction here which we must not fail to observe. This is the distinction between our Lord's coming *for* His saints and

His coming *with* His saints. Jude, verses 14 and 15; and Rev. 19 speak clearly of His descent to earth with His saints. This will be to crush His foes; to cast to their doom the two great henchmen of Satan, under whose black banner the hosts of Christ's enemies will in that day of decision be marshalled, as He has so plainly taught in the Revelation passage, and to establish His righteous rule on earth. If, however, Christ is going to descend to earth with His saints, He must first come for them. This but makes common sense. He must come *for* them, before He comes *with* them. It is this former aspect of His return that is presented in John 14-1-3, I Thess. 4.13-18 and numerous other passages. Thus His return will be in two parts. It will be one coming, mark you, but one coming in two distinct stages. Now, all the signs of the end time, all the signs given in Scripture which clearly and unmistakably indicate the last days, have in view the second aspect of His return. We are not to be blind to these. The Lord would say to us: "Can ye not discern the signs of the times?" Are these to be seen today? Yes, practically all of them are plainly in public evidence. The things foretold in Scripture are the things which now obtain in the world. People sometimes tell us that this grand old Book, the Bible, is not the very Word of God. I should like to ask such, why, if it is not, are the exact conditions which it predicts of the last days, the conditions which we presently see in modern life? Why are not the opposite conditions in evidence, if this volume, written thousands of years ago is not the inspired, faultlessly accurate Word of the Living God? Now if we discern the face of modern life to be true to the lineaments in the picture of the last days, drawn with meticulous care by the hand of the master Artist in Holy Scripture, then we know with certainty that the coming of our Lord in power and great glory is nigh, even at the doors. That this is the case I wish to demonstrate in my next paper (D.V.). It is true, of course, that there have been crises in the past which have possessed some of the features outlined in Scripture, but today we see them with a fulness and a completeness never before witnessed. It is no marvel, therefore, that there is a growing conviction amongst thoughtful men that the End is upon us. Even men who do not profess to be Christians can sense that a tremendous crisis is impending. "The end of everything that we call life is at hand", said H. G. Wells. "The world is falling to pieces and no one knows how to put it together", said George Bernard Shaw. If, then, the great catastrophe is so near, how much nearer must be the Lord's coming to snatch away His own people? for as we have seen it must take place first. Our Lord has said that when we see the end signs "*begin to come to pass*" (Luke 21.28)—that is when we see them in their initial stages—we are to lift up our heads with hopeful expectation; but it is now long since the initial stages of these signs were first observed. Writing 70 or perhaps 75 years ago the late Mr. John Nelson Darby, the saintly scholar and student said, "Godly men everywhere who watch the signs of the times, see the moment

approach which shall terminate the present actings of grace." And he was not alone in thus discerning the signs of the rapidly approaching End. Many other men of wide outlook and knowledge such as Lord Shaftsbury, the Earl of Cavan, Dr. Grattan Guinness and Sir Robert Anderson, also spoke with conviction about it. And why has the Lord not yet come? Because, "He is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish". Nevertheless, the signs of His revelation and judgment are well advanced. So the Rapture, the calling away of the saints of earth, must be expected at any moment. The sounds of our beloved Master's chariot are no longer distant. Soon we shall hear the glorious rallying cry in mid-air. This is our hope, sure and inviolate. What a prospect for the afflicted, suffering people of God! Oh, lift up your head, dear lonely, bereaved saint of God. Dry away the falling tear, your Lord is coming, perhaps today.

Some golden daybreak, Jesus will come,
Some golden daybreak, battles all won,
He'll shout the victory,
Break through the blue.
Some golden daybreak,
For me, for you.

JUDAH SHALL GO UP

Judges 1. 1-20.

by JOHN STUBBS

HAVING said the foregoing let us now consider together that which forms the title to this article. As the eye runs over the first chapter which gives the entrance of the various tribes into the land, and the conflicts in order to possess it, we see firstly that verses 1 to 20 have to do with Judah and their successes and victories. God is seen to be sufficient and sovereign. Secondly, in verse 21 we have the children of Benjamin. Thirdly, in verses 22 to 26 we have the history of the tribe of Joseph, and finally, in verses 27 to 36, we have the repeated mention of the failures of the other tribes to drive out the enemy. They simply enter the land and dwell together with the enemy, merely half-conquering them, for an enemy half defeated is an enemy unconquered.

All seems to hold encouragement, blessing and prosperity as we look at the first twenty verses of chapter 1, which tell the story of the victories of Judah. Apparently all is well and holds good possibility of the advancement of the people in the purposes of God, and of a keeping of their assurance to Joshua of serving the Lord their God and obeying His voice. We do not however have to travel far through the book to find that the position is reversed and the failure of the people comes out. Let us now seek to glean the typical lessons and moral principles relating to Judah, as it is with Judah that we are principally concerned. Let us remind ourselves that what

was land and material inheritance to them speaks to us in our day of spiritual blessings God has for us even now in Christ (Ephesians 1.3), for what was divine territory in the Old Testament is divine truth in the New.

The present occupiers of the land then were the Canaanites. They presented a barrier to the inheritance. So the children of Israel appealed to God as to who should go up for them against the Canaanites. How easy it would have been for them to send all them who were able to go forth to war, fit for the battle and expert in war (see Numbers 1.19 to 46, I Chronicles 12.8, 33 to 38, etc.), who to all intents and purposes would have been ideally suited to the urgent situation and great task that lay before the children of Israel. The answer and direction of God however, teaches us the ever important lesson that God's ways are not our ways, neither our thoughts His thoughts, and He declares, "Judah shall go up", and immediately assures them that already the land was delivered into their hand. Though we see much that is successful in the going up and conflict of Judah we must first see that having been assured by God Himself of victory that they then turn around and appeal to Simeon for their aid in the securing of Judah's lot, but Jehovah had said nothing of Simeon, but simply "Judah shall go up". Do we not see manifest here that which was of their own innovation and devising, in spite of being directed by God. Perhaps the greatness of the task was before them instead of the greatness of God's power for them. How sadly this is only too true of us today in our testimony for God.

Thus on asking God He not only names their leader in conquest but assures them of success. Judah then ignore the spoken, authoritative word of God, and solicit the aid of Simeon. It is well that we pause here in order to be taught a necessary lesson, for it is good and proper for spiritual warfare to be entirely dependent upon God, and seek His guidance, but this must necessarily be combined with a willingness to obey to the full the word of God. No sooner do we find the children of Israel crying to the Lord and receiving His answer than we find Judah beginning to lean upon the arm of the flesh, and turning to Simeon. Thus Judah in reality were adding to the spoken word of God as given to Israel in response to their plea. Judah had every reason to go forth leaning hard upon the Lord their God, for He had assured them Himself of victory, but what we see manifest in Judah is carnal alternatives and human expediences resorted to, which though for the time reap success, yet we see from verse 19 that Judah lose their power and fail to drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron. It will help us here to refer to Genesis 32, where in verses 9 to 12 we have Jacob's prayer. In that prayer he asks God to deliver him from the hand of his brother Esau, and reminds God of His promises to him, but as soon as his prayer is finished, instead of casting himself upon God and seeking His help he resorts to his usual planning to manage and cope with Esau himself, instead

of leaning upon God and tries to appease Esau with a present. Had Jacob forgotten his prayer? Did he place more confidence and trust in his present than in his God? The present then was of his own devising and innovation. In contrast to Jacob however, it is good to note in Ezra 8.22 and 23 in connection with the convoy of sacred treasure to Jerusalem that Ezra refused to lean on the arm of the flesh and says, "I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way." etc. May we have the grace to shun the action of Jacob and emulate the example of Ezra, and be marked by wholehearted obedience and be brought to an end of everything that speaks of self and our own expediences.

Returning now to the conflicts of Judah we would remark that Judah's name means "praise", and as one has well said, "The spirit of praise is the spirit of power". Judah is thus to be in the front as they were in the wilderness, (Numbers 2.9 and 10.14). In the Psalms we read, "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth Me". (Psalm 50.23). Praise puts God first, truly a praising people are an overcoming people. We would do well to cultivate this spirit. One has only to look through the history of the Acts of the apostles to see this illustrated. The disciples are seen there on one occasion after being beaten by a council to be rejoicing, (Acts 5.41), and we find later that the word of God increased and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly (Acts 6.7). Paul and Silas in the jail at Philippi at midnight prayed and sang praises unto God. On that same night the blessing of salvation came to the jailor's household (Acts 16.25). In praise we are occupied with God's goodness and blessings. If there was more of this amongst us what a grand incentive for warfare it would be with such as would rob us of our spiritual inheritance and as would prevent us from fully enjoying it now in Christ.

Let us therefore glean from this incident in the history of Judah the two great lessons of entire obedience to the commands of the Lord and of a complete forsaking of all that would speak of our own expediences and innovations.

THE pearl oyster becomes irritated by some foreign substance gaining entrance into his shell. Not being able to get rid of it he throws around it a gelatinous substance which hardens into a beautiful pearl. The thorns of life are the irritations: the all-sufficient "grace" and "strength" of Christ are for us to draw upon to produce pearls of glory to cast at His feet in that soon coming crowning day. Shall we not then go in for making our thorn trees produce figs, and our thistles produce grapes; only so shall 1967 be a happy New Year. E.A.M.

SATAN'S DEVICES

by W. P. W. McVEY

THE existence of Satan is taught in Scripture no less clearly than the existence of God himself. We might as well doubt or deny the one as the other. The third chapter of the Bible (Gen. 3) records mankind's first encounter with Satan and the third from the end (Rev. 20) foretells his final expulsion from the earth. For the present, Satan is everywhere represented as the implacable enemy of God and man. The Ephesian epistle teaches that two opposing powers are constantly at work in the world—"Him who *worketh* all things after the counsel of His own will" (1, 11), and "the spirit that now *worketh* in the children of disobedience" (2.2).

Though Satan cannot lay claim to God's three great attributes of omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence, he is nevertheless a being of great personal position and power. He has also at his command unseen hosts of wickedness. His record includes opposing God, tempting Christ and contending with Michael, the archangel—all these in addition to his constant warfare against the sons of men. All the New Testament writers mention Satan, not as an idea to be laughed at, but as a foe to be reckoned with. He is described by such significant names as "serpent" and "dragon" and is likened to a roaring and ravaging lion. He is a murderer and a liar; he is a deceiver and a seducer; he is a tempter and an accuser. Himself corrupt, he would corrupt others; himself fallen, he would effect the downfall of others. Though darkness is his domain he can appear, when it suits him, as an "angel of light". Where he cannot steal away the good seed of God's word from the hearts of men he will commingle with it with his own evil seed. The Bible warns us against his "snares" and "darts", his "wiles" and "devices".

God expects His people to be "not ignorant" of Satan's devices (2 Cor. 2.11) and to "stand against" his wiles (Eph. 6.11). To this end it is here proposed to examine the working of Satan as disclosed in the Scriptures.

1. SATAN COMING BETWEEN GOD AND MAN (Gen. 3). Satan's device with our first parents was to cast doubt in their minds with regard to *God's Word* and *God's way*. Soon he induced them to accept his own word and his own way instead. Adam and Eve could safely have learned about "good and evil" by referring their problem to God. Who was this intruder who would interpose himself between them and God? Why had he come to question God's Word? Could not the Lord himself teach them all they needed to know? But they listened to Satan who seduced them from the truth with disastrous results both for themselves and their posterity. Thus did Satan's earliest device succeed.

Having robbed God of His place in the affections of His creatures Satan is now described as "the god of this world", and his sinister

presence is everywhere felt. No wonder God's Word is denied and God's ways questioned on every hand; and when this is allegedly done in the interests of learning, progress, advancement, etc., we can surely detect an echo of Gen. 3. Nor does Satan adopt this line with the unsaved only; he will use it with the Christian also. Some with a sheltered background and Christian upbringing have been made to feel that they would broaden their experience and so eventually serve God better if they learned the ways of the world first! Their subsequent history exposes the folly of such a course.

2. SATAN COMING BETWEEN MAN AND MAN (Gen. 4).

1. John. 3.12 traces Abel's murder back to its proper source—"that wicked one". Men who reject divine revelation seek to attribute the violence and bloodshed of our present world to other causes: heredity, environment, repressions, obsessions, etc. All such factors are clearly ruled out from the Gen. 4 story and where they do exist they are but secondary causes. It is Satan who is the root cause of all the horrible deeds that men have committed against one another from the time of Abel until the present. It is Satan who has instigated all the cruel wars that have darkened the pages of human history. It is Satan in whom "the whole world lieth" (I John. 5.19) so that it is divided against itself and brought to desolation. May these facts grip our hearts with power and pathos so that, like certain men of Issachar long ago, we may have true "understanding of the times" in which we live.

3. SATAN COMING BETWEEN BROTHER AND BROTHER.

This is the real tragedy of the story of Cain and Abel, and it is always sad to see blood brothers at variance. Sadder still, however, is the sight of brethren in the Lord when Satan drives a wedge between them. Soon there will follow confusion and every evil work (Jas. 3.16). Nothing delights Satan more than to invade God's family and embitter His children the one against the other. It is in this context that John refers to the murder of Abel. Satan had designs on the Lord's elite band of disciples (Luke 22.31) and even among them was able to stir up differences and jealousies on the very night when the memorial feast was being instituted. With divine insight the Lord saw Satan's plan; with human sympathy He prayed that it might be thwarted. In this, as in all things, the Lord Jesus is our great Exemplar. Where such issues divide brethren our first impulse should never be to take the side of one against the other—the flesh invariably does so—rather we should take the side of both in prayer against Satan, the common foe. We should likewise make those brethren who wrong us a special object of prayer. If they have really wronged us their actions have been prompted by Satan in the first place; hence the need for prayer that they may be delivered out of his snare. To do otherwise would but play into his hands.

4. SATAN COMING BETWEEN GOD AND THE SAINT. (Job 1 and 2).

The words, "thou movedst Me against him to destroy

him without cause" (2.3) reveal the depth of Satan's malignity. He hoped to break up the friendship between God and the patriarch by making God forsake Job and then Job forsake God. He basely suggested that Job served God out of mercenary motives only and sought to penetrate the "hedge" (1.10) that the Lord had placed around His servant. If we have any doubts about the wickedness and heartlessness of Satan we should examine his treatment of this "perfect and upright" man. Exploiting to the full the permission God had given him he marshalled calamity after calamity and then hurled them into the life of Job—death to his family, destruction to his property, disease (perhaps a form of leprosy) to his person. How far Satan afterwards moved Eliphaz and the others to go and "comfort" Job we cannot say; but we may be sure he gloated over every barbed word that cut to the man's heart. We are not surprised that Job spoke of being broken and bitter (9.17, 18). But divine grace sustained him, and with faith in God as his anchor Job outrode all the storms of life. To Satan we say: what a shame! To God and Job: what a triumph!

5. SATAN COMING BETWEEN GOD AND THE BACKSLIDER (Zech. 3.) The book of Zechariah begins with a series of visions concerning God's gracious dealings with Israel, His erring people. Joshua's "filthy garments" (so sadly different from the "holy garments . . . for glory and beauty" prescribed for the high priest in Ex. 28) bespeak the moral defilement of the nation as seen by God. Likewise the "change of raiment" foreshadows better days for Israel when the Lord will have cleansed them from their iniquity and restored them to Himself. But why should this restoration be delayed? Because Satan stands at the right hand of the angel of Jehovah "to resist him". The verb that Zechariah used here is "Satan", which fact reveals the true character of Satan and shows what that name involves. He unceasingly resists the work of God and "opposeth . . . all that is called God". He opposes the restoration of a believer just as much as the conversion of a sinner, so that the erring saint and the erring sinner need our prayers alike. Satan will put countless obstacles in the way to restoration as many a backslider has proved. It is much easier to forfeit fellowship with God than to regain it. Joseph and Mary went just "a day's journey" when they left the Lord behind in Jerusalem but it was only "after three days" that they found Him again (Luke 2).

6. SATAN COMING BETWEEN GOD AND THE ASSEMBLY (2. Cor. 2.1-11) In his first epistle to the Corinthian church Paul instructed them to excommunicate an immoral member and thus "deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh". Now he warns them that Satan is on their track also. The danger was that the assembly at large would harbour an unforgiving spirit towards the offending brother long after he had shown signs of repentance. The closing verses of Matt. 18 reveal how obnoxious such a spirit is in the sight of God and how it ill becomes individual Christians

to speak contrary to an assembly. Paul feared therefore that Satan might produce this state of heart among the Corinthians, for in that event they would be in no condition themselves to receive back the repentant brother nor could they faithfully represent the God of all grace in their community. The seriousness of the situation can be seen in the fact that Paul mentions Satan and his working in this epistle more than any other.

Satan still seeks to "get an advantage of us" along these very lines. He will exploit one single instance of sin until he has involved the whole assembly and often other assemblies as well. He will seize on one "root of bitterness" and thereby cause many to be defiled (Heb. 12.15), thus ruining the spiritual tone of a whole company of believers. Satan has made more havoc of the assemblies in this way than the persecutions of Saul ever did.

7. SATAN ATTEMPTING TO COME BETWEEN THE FATHER AND THE SON. (Luke 4). There is nothing whatever in the story of the temptation to suggest that the Lord Jesus could, or would, sin. The Scriptures clearly teach His absolute impeccability. From Satan's standpoint, however, there was a definite and deliberate attempt to involve the Lord in sin and he "completed every temptation" (Luke 4.13. R.V.) with that end in view. Satan hoped at this stage to deflect the Saviour from a path of unreserved obedience to the will of the Father who had publicly proclaimed Him as His beloved Son at the time of His baptism. It was immediately after this event that the temptation took place and Satan launched his attack with the words, "If Thou be the Son of God . . ." The logic was simple yet subtle. What father would see his son hungry? And what father would blame his son, if hungry, for helping himself to food? The Son of God, of all people, should lack nothing. In fact He should have nothing but the best.

The temptation of the Lord has often been placed side by side with that of our first parents and the comparisons and contrasts noted. Here we observe but one point: unlike Adam, Christ held firmly to God's Word and God's will. Whether it was a matter of food for the body, or the kingdoms of the world, or angelic ministry, He would receive nothing in Satan's way or from Satan's hand. Instead He would be guided entirely by God's word and receive all things from the Father's hand in due time. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him." If He refused glory from the Devil (Luke 4.6-8) God gave Him almost immediate glory in the eyes of the people when He returned from the wilderness in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4.14-15). And still greater glory will be His when He comes again to deal with Satan in summary fashion and despatch him eternally to the Lake of Fire. For the present Satan is the same dangerous and ruthless foe that he has always been and we cannot possibly face him alone. Small wonder then that the Lord taught the disciples to pray: "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one."

MODERN ALLUREMENTS

by FRANKLIN FERGUSON

WE are living in an evil day when the love of many towards Christ is waxing cold. Worldly friendships, society aspirations, love of pleasures, popular recreations, and costly extravagance are eating the very life out of Christian testimony, and effectively destroying the pilgrim character; so that in very many instances there is a surprising lack of the things which should distinguish the professed child of God from the children of this world. "How is the fine gold become dim!" (Lam. 4. 1) may well be remarked.

When King Balak of old could not induce Balaam to curse Israel, he and his people showed themselves sociable, and, with apparent friendliness, called the Hebrews to their sacrifices. Moreover, unholy alliances were contracted with the daughters of Moab, so that the fierce anger of God was kindled against His people whom He had redeemed and separated from the nations, and whom He meant to keep always and altogether separate that they might be a special people unto Himself. The chastisement that fell upon Israel for their unfaithfulness was most solemn—a plague swept off twenty-four thousand of them. (Numbers 25. 9).

Nowadays, many Christian parents, who have professedly separated from "this present evil world" (Gal. 1. 4), seem desirous that their children should be introduced into what the world terms "good society". Friendships are formed and permitted with those who are strangers to God and His ways. Social position may indeed be gained, but at a grievous loss to the soul. Perhaps there ensues a complete alienation of the heart from the things of the Lord, and an undisguised distaste for anything spiritual. Let us remember that between Christ and the world there is nothing in common, and His cross should be the permanently separating barrier (Gal. 6. 14). There can be no society better than the people of God, whom He describes as the excellent of the earth (Psa. 16. 3, R.V.); and no friendship better than Christ Himself, who is enough the mind and heart to fill, here and in eternity.

There is also an inordinate thirst everywhere for pleasures, that leading evil characteristic of the last days! (2 Tim. 3. 4). Everything must be mixed with pleasure or it will be turned down. Sobriety is getting out of fashion, and we must not take anything now too seriously! Even the preaching of the gospel must be "bright," and the services

"attractive," albeit the Holy Spirit came that He might convict men of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16. 8). Our Christian gatherings also must have a spice of "entertainment," to suit the spiritual degeneracy that has set in. Religious Babylon is permeated with this spirit of amusement, and all its Church affairs and observances must be made to please the people. Let us beware of every innovation from that quarter to gratify the flesh in us; for it will grieve the Holy Spirit of God. We want the realized presence and power of God, and all else is out of place.

Another allurements is recreation, which is going mad these days, and Christians are being caught in its grip. A pleasant walk, a little gardening, fishing, some home hobby, etc., were once the recreations indulged in—good for body and mind. But now it is the tennis party, the golf links, the cricket, the football, and bowling green—mixing of saved and unsaved together. In the evening it is the social party, the popular music, the "sacred" concert, and last and worst, the "pictures." You cannot tell us that such things as these are God's intended means for the recreation of His redeemed who are purchased with the blood of His crucified Son. It is impossible to think of recreation in association with enemies of God! "Come out from among them and be ye separate" (2 Cor. 6. 17). Pleasure is essential for our well-being; but we have it in Christ Himself, and in the simple things His own hand has provided.

Lastly, what unrestrained extravagance is taking possession of the people, and the children of God are falling a prey to its ravages. Things that are plain, neat, simple, comfortable and inexpensive, are being exchanged for the up-to-date, fashionable and costly things, in houses, furnishings, vehicles, clothing (sometimes hardly decent), golden ornaments, etc. etc. This copying of the world ill befits the heavenly pilgrim and stranger! What an amount of money is wasted on costly and extravagant things, that could be laid up in heaven!

Oh, for a return to a simple, Christ-honouring life, that which becomes the followers of the One who was meek and lowly! Then shall our hearts be taken up with Him; unspeakable joy will be our present portion; and great will be our reward hereafter.

At the time of going to press we heard of the home-call of our brother William Bunting. For him a happy release from suffering to see the King in all His beauty. Prayer is requested for Mrs. Bunting and the family.

PRESENT-DAY TENDENCIES

by W. HARRISON, Glasgow.

THE Apostle Paul in his second letter to Corinth mentions the possibility of Satan gaining advantage over the saints and affirms, "We are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2. 11). One feels that the believers of to-day are almost unaware of Satan's existence and have no interest in his devices. This word "devices" is rendered "minds" in 2 Cor. 3. 14; 4. 4; and in 11. 3. In the latter passage Paul speaks of the mind being corrupted from the simplicity that is towards Christ, even as the subtle serpent beguiled Eve. Eve's first attitude towards God was simplicity in knowledge, and therefore in behaviour, for she knew nothing save what came from God. Satan's bait was **increased knowledge**, but it was the death-knell of sinless simplicity. Satan still works through the thoughts and conceptions of men, even with believers, and his methods are much the same to-day as then. The spirit of the age is the atmosphere of the god of this age, and his movements among men generally have their reaction among the assemblies of God.

The assemblies to-day are a result of the Spirit of God's movement among some Christians over a century ago. These Christians, like Elisha of old, proved themselves men of God by their recovery of things that had been lost (see 2 Kings 2. 6). The recovery of truths such as the Spirit's liberty in ministry, the breaking of the bread on the first day of the week, and the personal return of the Son of God for His own, brought them out of all manner of religious associations in order to enjoy these truths in Divine power. Simplicity in dress, manner, order of meeting together, and in functioning as God's assembly, characterised them. We have gradually moved away from that simplicity until to-day elaboration is a feature of assembly life everywhere. Our social gatherings to-day purporting to present Christian themes do so after the manner of the concert hall, even to the applause that accompanies the performances. Other things there are in vogue to-day the product of man's conceptions, but having no authority from Scripture. A typical lesson from the Tabernacle might serve to set this in a Scriptural light. Every vessel in the House of God had two distinguishing features. There was a word from God for its existence, and it was anointed with oil (Exodus 40. 9-11). The simple believer may be excused for thinking that only that for which

there is a word from God can have the Spirit's anointing now. Like Eve before her seduction he knows nothing but what he gets from God's charter.

In the matter of hymns the spirit of the age can surely be traced. A twentieth century critic and exponent of the poetic art proclaims that "Poetry is not the thing said but a way of saying it." "Meaning is of the intellect, poetry is not." A verse it seems may be nonsense but "at the same time ravishing poetry." But praise is for the ear of the Lord, and it would be blasphemy of a very high order to offer Him nonsense in the form of ravishing poetry set to music. We come perilously near this at times. Even if brethren of a soberer mood write rhymed ministry it is to be preferred to rhymed nonsense. How can we sing with the spirit and with the understanding if the form of sound words has been departed from? How many present-day hymns have either a meaning divorced from Scripture truth or no meaning at all?

If there is failure in that which is offered by the lips to the Lord it follows that in that which is offered to the people the error will if anything be more pronounced. The trumpet in many cases gives forth a very uncertain sound. The result is seen in the conduct of those who confess to being impressed by it. Eloquence is not wanting, but power is, and, as a writer in 'The Times' recently wrote: "The preaching which has effected most has not been that which by its wealth of learning or impressive eloquence has compelled admiration, but that which, though often simple and even homely, has had in it some touch of the mysterious Divine power." People need to be helped, not entertained. You may give them, on the other hand, a "flyting" (a not uncommon thing to-day), but there is a more excellent way. The Gospel Paul preached was "help" (cf. vv. 9 and 10 of Acts 16). When Apollos ministered in Corinth he "**helped them much** which had believed through grace" (Acts 18. 27). Apollos had eloquence, knowledge, zeal and courage, but he never could have helped the saints but for the corrective ministry of the tent-maker and his wife (v. 26). The gifts of an Apollos are nothing apart from that humility which is willing to receive instruction from the simplest and humblest of God's saints.

Christians would be happier and more fruitful if they were more content with Divine simplicities.

From "The Believer's Magazine".

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