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The Midnight Cry!

H. A. Ironside

Faithful Men

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“The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2)

Preface to Fourth Edition

So rapid have been the changes, and so markedly has the way been prepared for the predicted end of the age, since this booklet was first published in 1914, that it has been thought wise to bring it more nearly up-to-date by adding considerable new matter and making a few revisions. None of the latter have in the slightest degree modified the views originally set forth, as every passing year has but convinced the writer of the certainty of the prophetic program as revealed in the Word of God and confirmed by the signs of the times.

—H. A. Ironside. June, 1928

Foreword

The day has passed when writers or preachers need to tender an apology for calling attention to the supremely important subject of the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. Only the wilfully blind and culpably ignorant can fail to discern the signs of the times that so clearly indicate the approaching return of Him for whom saints in all ages since His ascension have earnestly yearned.

It was once the fashion to scoffingly refer to pre-millennial teachers as “visionary enthusiasts” and “rank pessimists,” when they declared that the coming of the King, and not humanitarian agencies, would alone bring in the reign of peace on earth predicted by the angel host. But the pessimists are now on the other side. The frightful European convulsion has caused a wail to rise from thousands once given to lauding the achievements of civilization and the evolutionary progress of the race. The so-called Christian nations, whether Romanist, Greek or Protestant, have proven to be only veneered barbarians, and the conditions predicted to prevail immediately before the coming of the Son of Man are rapidly being developed. The seals of the roll taken by the Lamb have not yet been broken, but little discernment is needed to see that few changes will be necessary to prepare the world for the riders on the four horses and the shaking of all things terrestrial. Therefore the need of sounding out with all faithfulness, in the little time that remains, the awakening midnight cry:

“Behold, the Bridegroom Cometh;

It is late—midnight is already past. The dark hours preceding the shining forth of the Morning Star are upon us. Lamps must be trimmed and provided with oil *now*, or it will shortly be too late to go in with Him to the wedding. To rouse the sleepers is the object of this paper. May God speed the message and bless the present truth!

It is late in the dispensation, so late that everything else pales into insignificance before the great blazing fact of all facts that "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." To all His own the cry rings out in power:

"Awake, Thou That Sleepest!"

The Lord Jesus spoke of ten virgins who went forth to meet the Bridegroom. It depicted the early days of the Church's history, when love was warm and saints longed to behold His face once marred for them on Calvary's tree—now shining with a radiance brighter than the mid-day sun. Wherever apostolic preachers went they carried the good news, not alone of a Saviour who had come in grace, and in deepest humiliation had suffered and died, the Just for the unjust, to bring men to God, but they also declared in language unmistakable and with solemn assurance that the once-Crucified was coming again, coming to summon His own to Himself above, and take them in to the Father's house; then, with all His redeemed, to appear visibly before an astonished world and, putting down all other rule, to take His great power and reign.

The Old Testament had predicted the sufferings and the following glory of Him who was to be Israel's Messiah, and a Redeemer for the whole world. Apostolic preaching was based

on these two great pillars of divine revelation. He had come to *suffer*. He was *coming again* to bring in *the glory*! And so, the Christian company, like virgins waiting the call to go in to the marriage-feast in the Bridegroom's train, turned their expectant faces toward the glory-gate, longing for their Lord's return.

But days, and months, and years slipped by. The expected One had not forgotten. He did not willingly delay His coming, but His heart yearned over others who had not yet found eternal blessing through His sufferings; and because He was "not willing that any should perish," He waited in mercy till many more might be saved. It was right to look for Him daily; but it was wrong to assume that He must come in any particular generation. And here the virgins failed. They strained their eyes for One whose face they did not see; they yearned for One who seemed to disappoint their hopes; then they took their ease, gave up the waiting attitude and slept among the dead. And while they slept, they dreamed. The dreams were strange and wonderful, but far different from the reality their waking eyes had looked upon.

The whole professing Church seemed lulled to slumber as by the devil's opiates. And then it was they dreamed of a converted world, and of a millennium brought in by human agencies, which drove from the mind and heart the truth that earth's only hope was in the Coming One.

Fitful was the slumber at times; deep and heavy the sleep at others, as through the long night the professing Church dreamed on. But at the mystic midnight hour a Voice broke in upon the drowsing virgin company that roused them from their visionary deceptions, and startled them to preparation

for the forgotten One they had gone out to meet. It was the cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!" And loud it swells, and louder, waking every sleeping saint—yea, and arousing some who only have a name, and many more who have not even that!

To-day the loudest voice on earth is that of the announcer of the coming Christ! Everywhere the midnight cry is sounding out, bringing with it solemn responsibilities, and causing many hearts to fail with fear, while others are filled with joy. It has been heard in the cannon's roar and the rattling musketry-fire on scores of battlefields. It sounds in the swelling tumult and wordy war of capital and labor. It cries aloud in Christendom's widespread apostasy, to turn from fables that suit itching ears unto the faith once for all delivered to the saints. It rings out in power in the great awakening among Christians in all lands, stirring them to Bible study and calling to preparation of heart and life in view of the Bridegroom's coming. Israel too, unknowingly, are helping to shout the warning, yet joyful announcement, that "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh!" The "fig-tree" of Judah, and "all the trees" of the Gentile nations, are putting forth their green boughs declaring that summer is nigh.

It is in view of all this that I would solemnly challenge my reader: What will the Lord's personal coming mean to you? Do you know that One who is coming, or are you still a stranger to the long-promised Deliverer of this groaning creation? His advent draws on apace—"Yet a very, very little while, and the Coming One will come and shall not tarry." And *you*, how does such news as this affect you? If redeemed to God by the precious atoning blood, if saved in the Lord with an everlasting

salvation, you may well leap for joy at the very thought of soon beholding your Saviour's face. But if still in your sins, still "in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity," it is high time that you be awakened to the seriousness of your condition. For, whether you are ready to meet Him or not, *He is coming again*, and His advent will mean fulness of blessing for His own, but unmitigated wrath for those who have trampled upon the offers of His grace.

Reader, awake! Open your eyes, unstop your ears; arouse yourself while yet there remains a moment of mercy. The midnight cry rings loud and clear:

"Behold, the Bridegroom Cometh!
Go Ye Out to Meet Him."

But on every hand is also heard the voice of the scoffer and objector. The unfaithful servant shuts his eyes to the most manifest signs of the times, and cries, "My Lord delayeth His coming." The unbelieving scorner asks ironically, "Watchman, what of the night?" and tarries not for the answer, "The morning cometh, and *also the night!*" The scornful cynic exclaims: "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation!" But he is wilfully and culpably ignorant of the solemn fact that all things do *not* continue as they were, for changes of vast import and momentous consequences are taking place—politically, religiously, and even physically, in the earth beneath and the heavens above. Even earnest Christians are not wanting who ask, hesitatingly perhaps, but none the less unbelievingly, "What special reasons are there for expecting the Lord Jesus now, which

have not always existed since He ascended to heaven? The apostolic band and believers in the earliest period were all looking for His return. Yet He came not, and long centuries have since elapsed. What evidence is there that *now* His advent is so nigh, and that there may not be as long a time yet to elapse ere He comes back than has already passed?"

We admit the reasonableness of the queries, while grieved at the latent unbelief they manifest. To answer them is the writer's present design, and in order to do so there are a large number of scriptures relating to the Jews, the Gentiles and the Church of God, which it will be necessary to examine. To take them up in their inverse order may be most helpful at the present time, so we shall first of all inquire, What can be gleaned from the past history of, and present conditions prevailing in the Church of God that would indicate the soon closing-up of the present age and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Part I: The Evidence that the Church of God Is About to Close Its Earthly History

Even in apostolic days the near return of the Lord Jesus was ever kept before the souls of believers as **a** present hope; yet there are many scriptures that in **a** hidden way (as we can now realize) intimated **a** certain series of events, or succession of conditions, which would run their course ere the blessed hope was fulfilled. In the wisdom of God these prophetic forecasts of the Church's history were couched in terms of such **a** nature as not to hinder Christians of any period in their continued expectancy of the Lord's coming, which was designed to be a great sheet-anchor to their souls, keeping them from drifting into worldliness and kindred folly.

But now that nearly twenty centuries (two of God's great "days"—2 Pet. 3:8) have elapsed, we can look back over the long course of the Church's pilgrimage and see how all her varied states and experiences were foreknown and foretold, and the heart thrills with joyful expectancy as we look ahead. For the next great miraculous event *must* be the shining forth of the Morning Star, "the coming of the Lord Jesus, and our gathering together unto Him."

I purpose to trace this out from several different standpoints. In our introduction we have noticed briefly how the Lord Himself intimated what has been mentioned in the parable of the ten virgins. It was a veiled picture of the whole course of Christendom, and plainly divides the Church dispensation into three distinct stages, or epochs: First, the period of eager

expectation. Second, the era of lethargic indifference to the blessed hope. Third, the season of awakening which was the almost immediate precursor of the coming of the Bridegroom. We are living in this last solemn time, and it is well to be trimming our lamps and waiting in holy fear for the summons which may come at any moment to enter in with Him to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

The parable of the Ten Virgins was not given, it is true, to teach Church truth, but it presents in a graphic way the responsibility of saints to wait for the return of the Lord.

There are other passages corroborative of this interpretation, and to them let us now turn.

In the two epistles to Timothy we have two distinct conditions predicted as characterizing what the Holy Spirit designates “the latter times” and “the last days.” In 1 Tim. 4:1-5 He speaks of the first of these periods; in 2 Tim. 3:1-9, of the second. A careful reading of both passages ought, I think, to convince any reader that they show the progress of evil.

At any rate, the conditions of the “latter times” were the first to develop, and out of these grew the anarchic state of the “last days.”

I quote the first scripture in full: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared (Gk., cauterized); forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it

be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (1911 Version).

Now while the various things here credited to demoniacal influence are found in many modern systems, such as Christian Science, Seventh-day Adventism, and others, it is very evident that it was in connection with the Romish apostasy they were first introduced. The “latter times” were the times of Papal domination. Their evil teachings are still to be found on many sides, but the point I want to make is that the latter times have long since been passed, and we are further down the course of time than many have supposed.

Note well how Rome has fulfilled these predictions to the letter. Departing from the faith of God’s word, she has been misled by evil spirits seducing her devotees to believe that the church cannot err, and that her voice is the voice of inspiration. Thus has Satan foisted doctrines of demons on the blinded nations. Rome, the very citadel of untruth, has spoken lies in hypocrisy, her leaders having cauterized consciences which seemed immune to all Scriptural appeals. This the Reformation proved, when God “gave her space to repent...and she repented not” (Rev. 2:21).

But one might say: “All this is mere assumption. You tell us Rome is demon-led. You tell us her hierarchy teach lies in hypocrisy. But this is the very point to be proven. What outward evidence have you that she is the guilty one?”

In reply we turn to verse 3, where God has given us two great marks which none can successfully deny fit Rome, as they fully describe no other large communion. It was Rome who forbade to marry—enjoining an unnatural celibacy upon her vast clergy and her hosts of monks and nuns, thus setting herself up to be

wiser than God (who says: “Marriage is honorable in all,” Heb. 13: 4), belittling His holy ordinance of matrimony, declaring the celibate nun far holier than the married mother, and the unwedded priest in a higher state of grace than the godly husband and father.

And what of the second mark? Who has so assiduously cultivated the dogma that piety is manifested in abstention from certain foods, as Rome? God created all to be received with thanksgiving. Rome would damn the one who ate flesh on Fridays and gave God thanks therefor! Her numberless rules on such subjects declare all too plainly that she it is who is marked out in 1 Tim. 4: 1-5. Others have been deluded by the same demons, but it was in the Roman apostasy that the “latter times” came in.

Now let us turn to the second epistle: “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be self-lovers, money-lovers, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, unforgiving, false accusers, incontinent, savage, haters of good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away. For of this sort are they who creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with manifold desires, ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all, as theirs also was” (1911 Version).

These are the great outstanding features of the “last days”—closing the Church dispensation, and to be immediately followed by the coming of the Lord. Can any believer in Holy Writ doubt our being now in the very midst of them?

But it may be here objected: “When have men in general been other than as here depicted? Is not this but a repetition, of what Paul has already said in describing the heathen world in his day? (Rom. 1: 29-32). In what special sense are they any more characteristic now than then?” To these very natural queries I reply: “Such things, indeed, ever described the heathen; but in 2 Tim. 3 the Holy Spirit is describing conditions in *the professing Church* in the last days! It is not the openly wicked and godless who are being depicted here. It is those who have a form of godliness, while denying its power. This is what makes the passage so intensely solemn and gives it such tremendous weight in the present day. There are twenty-one outstanding features in this depicting of Church conditions in the last days, and that each may have its due weight with my reader I touch briefly on them in order.

1. “Men shall be self-lovers.” It is men self-occupied, as contrasted with the godly of all ages who found their joy and delight in looking away from self to God as seen in Christ. This is the age of the egotist in matters spiritual as well as carnal. They find their God “within” them, we are told, and not without. They make no secret of it. When they profess to love God it is *themselves* they love.
2. “Money-lovers.” Is it necessary to speak of this? Colossal fortunes heaped together by men who profess to believe the Bible and its testimony! What a spectacle for angels and demons! There was one Simon Magus of old. He has

myriads of successors in the professing church to-day, and the command “not to eat” with a covetous man or an extortioner is in most places a dead letter indeed.

3. “Boasters.” Read the so-called Christian papers; attend Christendom’s great conventions of young people, or old. Listen to the great pulpiteers of the day. What is their theme? “Rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing!” Great swelling words are rapturously applauded by people dwelling in a fool’s paradise, even when uttered by men who are tearing the Bible to shreds, and who deny practically every truth that it contains.
4. “Proud.” So proud as to glory in their shame—congratulating themselves on the very things the Word of God so unsparingly condemns. Proud of their fancied superiority; proud of their eloquence; proud of their miscalled culture; proud of their very impiety, which is hailed as the evidence of broad-mindedness and a cultivated intellect! How nauseating it must all be to Him who said, “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.”
5. “Blasphemers!” Yes, there it is—that big, ugly word that one hesitates to use, but which is chosen by the Holy Spirit Himself to describe the men drawing salaries as ministers of Christ who use their office to impiously deny His name! Blasphemers! Aye, the whole host of the new theologians, miscalled “higher critics,” and all their ilk—all who deny the deity of the Son, His virgin-birth, His holy humanity—blasphemers, every one, and as such to be judged unsparingly in the harvest of wrath so near at hand! And

think of the disloyalty to Christ of Christians— real Christians, I mean—who can sit and listen to such men week after week, and are too timid to protest, or too indifferent to obey the word, “From such turn away!”

6. “Disobedient to parents.” It is one of the crowning sins of the age, and indicates the soon breaking-up of the whole social fabric as at present constituted. Opposition to authority is undoubtedly one of the characteristic features of the times. Children will not brook restraint, and parents have largely lost the sense of their responsibility toward the rising generation. Does this seem unduly pessimistic? Nevertheless, a little thoughtful consideration will, I am sure, convince any reasonable person of its truth. And it may be laid down as an axiom, that children not trained in obedience to parents will not readily be obedient to God. We have been sowing the wind in this respect for years, as nations and as families. The reaping of the whirlwind is certain to follow.
7. “Unthankful.” It is the denial of divine Providence—utterly forgetting the Source of all blessings, both temporal and spiritual. Straws indicate the turn of the wind, and even in “so small a matter,” as some may call it, as the giving-up of the good old-fashioned and eminently scriptural custom of thanksgiving at the table, we may see how prevalent is the sin of unthankfulness among professed Christians. Go into the restaurants or other eating-houses; how often can you tell the believer from the unbeliever?
8. “Unholy.” The godly separation from the world according to the Bible is sneered at as “bigotry” and “Puritanism.” In its place has come a jolly, rollicking worldliness that ill

comports with the Christian profession. Piety—that characteristic Christian virtue—how little seen now! It is not necessary to be outwardly vile to be unholy. Giving up the line of separation between the believer and the unbeliever is unholiness.

9. “Without natural affection.” The foundations of family life are being destroyed. Un-scriptural divorces and all their kindred evils cast their dark shadows over the professing church, as well as over the body politic.

Of the next unholy octave I need not write particularly. To enumerate them is enough to stir the heart and appal the soul when it is remembered how they are tolerated and spreading through the great professing body. 10—“unforgiving;” 11—“false accusers” (let us beware lest we be found almost unwittingly in this Satanic company!); 12 —“incontinent”; 13 —“savage”; 14 —“haters of good;” 15—“traitors”; 16 —“heady;” 17—“high-minded.” This last accounts largely for the daring things proudly uttered by learned doctors against the Scriptures and the great fundamentals of the faith, and complacently accepted by unregenerate hearers. Surely, the time *has* come “when they will not bear sound teaching, but according to their own desire shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (2 Tim.4:3, 1911 Version).

18. “Lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God.” Would you not almost think the words were written by some fiery-souled exhorter of the present day? How aptly they characterize in one brief clause the greatest outstanding feature of the religious world. The Church of God has gone into the entertainment business! People must be amused, and as the Church needs the people’s money, the Church must, perforce,

supply the demand and meet the craving! How else are godless hypocrites to be held together? How otherwise can the throngs of unconverted youths and maidens be attracted to the “services”? So the picture-show and the entertainment, in the form of *musicale* (sacred, perhaps!) and minstrel-show, take the place of the gospel address and the solemn worship of God. And thus Christless souls are lulled to sleep and made to feel “religious” while gratifying every carnal desire under the sanction of the sham called the Church!—And the end? What an awakening!

19. “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” Men must have some form of religious expression, and so the outward thing is sustained after the life is gone out of it. Thus formality prevails where regeneration, conversion to God, the Spirit’s sanctification, and every thing really vital has long since been virtually denied. The bulk of so-called church-members do not even profess to have been saved, or to be Spirit-indwelt. All this is foreign to their mode of thought or speech. The gospel, which alone is “the power of God unto salvation,” is seldom preached, and, by the mass, never missed! Could declension and apostasy go much further? Yet there are still lower depths to be sounded!

20. Feminism. No, you won’t find the word—but read verse 6 again, slowly and thoughtfully. Does it not indicate a great feminist movement in these last dark days? “Silly women, laden with manifold desires”—craving what God in His in- finite wisdom

has forbidden them: authority, publicity, masculinity, and what not? Thus they leave their own estate and make a new religion to suit themselves. Is it a matter of no import that just such emotional, insubject women were the tools used by Satan for the starting and propagating of so many modern fads? Need one mention Mesdames Blavatsky, Besant and Tingley of Theosophy; the Fox sisters' relation to modern Spiritism; Mrs. Mary Baker Glover Eddy and her host of female practitioners in the woman's religion miscalled "Christian Science;" the neurotic Ellen G. White and her visionary system of "Seventh-day Adventism;" Ella Wheeler Wilcox and her associates in the spreading of what they have been pleased to denominate the "New Thought," which is only the devil's old lie, "Ye shall be as gods," in a modern garb; and the women-expounders of the "Silent Unity," or "Home of Truth" delusions? All these are outside the "orthodox" fold; —but when we look within, what a large place has the modern feminist movement secured in the affections of women who profess to believe the Bible, but who unblushingly denounce Paul as "an old batchelor" with narrow, contracted ideas, little realizing that they are thereby rejecting the testimony of the Holy Spirit. It is one of the signs of the times, and clearly shows towards what the professing body is so rapidly drifting!

21. "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth"—and that by *their own* confession. They are "truth-seekers." Ask them if it be not so. They confess it without a blush, and consider it humility thus to speak. According to these apostates, the Church which began as "the pillar and ground of the truth," is, in this twentieth century of its existence, "seeking" the truth, thereby acknowledging they never yet have found it! Truth-seekers! Yet the Lord Jesus said,

“I am the Way, the TRUTH, and the Life.” Why then seek further? Because they have drifted away from Him and His Word, so they go on, ever learning, ever seeking, and ever missing the glorious revelation of the TRUTH as it is in Jesus.

Well—this is the end. Declension can go no further than to deny the Lord that bought them, until He Himself shall remove His own to the Father’s house. Then the apostate body remaining will declare, “We have found the truth at last!” and they will worship the Antichrist, believing the devil’s lie and calling it the truth. And how comes such delusion? “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie; that they all might be judged *who believed not the truth* but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess. 2:11, 12—1911 Version).

Predictions of two directly opposite conditions are made in the word of God in regard to events to be consummated immediately before the Lord’s return to establish His kingdom and close up the Times of the Gentiles. If therefore we see these predictions within a small degree of being already fulfilled prior to the rapture of the Church, we may be certain that the coming of the Saviour to the air is very near at hand.

The predictions referred to were made—one directly by the Lord Himself; the other by the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul. To the question of the disciples, “What shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the age?” the Lord gave a lengthy answer recorded in Matthew, chaps. 24 and 25; but the prediction I refer to now is that of the 14th verse of chap. 24: “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all the nations; *and then shall the end come.*” Now I recognize, in common with others, a distinction in

aspect between “the gospel of the kingdom” and “the gospel of the grace of God,” but I regard it as a mistake to say that the gospel of the kingdom is not, or should not be, preached *now*. Each are but different aspects of the one gospel; and Paul preached both.

In Acts 20: 24, 25 we find the two aspects intimately connected in the ministry of the apostle Paul: “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify *the gospel of the grace of God*. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone *preaching the kingdom of God*, shall see my face no more.” See also Acts 14: 22. When he wrote, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,” it involved the present phase of the gospel of the kingdom; when he added, “And believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead thou shalt be saved,” it was the gospel of the grace of God. Christ Jesus is *Lord*. He is also *Redeemer*. Men are called on to own Him in both characters. In the Jewish age, and in the coming tribulation period, the gospel of the *kingdom* is the emphatic phase. Now, where there is intelligence, it is the *grace* of God that the gospel preacher will lay special stress upon.

Now it is the individual believer who owns the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Tribulation era, when Matt. 24:14 will be completely carried out, the whole world will be called on to own the sway of Him who is about to appear as King of kings and Lord of lords to reign over His world-kingdom.

But why this effort to show that the gospel of the kingdom is *now* being preached? Because, my reader, the *end* comes when it has been carried into all the world, for a witness! And even

now it has gone to the uttermost parts of the earth, so that it can confidently be said that with the possible exception of a few *wild* tribes of Indians in South America, or negroes in Africa, , there is probably no nation to whom the witness has not already been given. The nineteenth was the greatest missionary century since the days of the apostles. In one hundred years, the gospel was practically carried to the whole world after a millennium of lethargy and indifference to the claims of the heathen. This great missionary awakening is like the trumpet-blasts that herald the King's approach. In this twentieth century the work of carrying the gospel to the pagan world has gone on more extensively than ever. None can say when the last tribe or nation will get the witness message, but when they do, "*then* shall the end come." And, mark it well, it is not before the rapture, but after it, that the final call is to be given. It will be Jewish saints, and not Christian missionaries, who will complete the work of world-wide evangelization; therefore the coming of the Lord as predicted in 1 Thess. 4 must be very near!

But now we turn to consider the other prediction to which I referred in the beginning. "That day," writes the apostle, "shall not come except there come the apostasy first" (literal rendering of 2 Thess. 2:3). This is startling surely—the gospel going into all the world, the apostasy sweeping all before it, and both just before the end, or the day of the Lord, shall come! How strange a paradox, and yet how exactly are both scriptures being fulfilled! Never before such wide-spread missionary activity! Never before such far-reaching apostasy! Earnest workers guided by the Holy Spirit are hazarding their lives to carry the good news of Christ's incarnation, atonement, resurrection and coming again to the heathen

world. Equally earnest, but Satan-inspired, men at home are tearing the Bible in pieces and railing at these very truths once for all delivered to the saints, and, alas! their unholy rationalizing is fast finding its way into the fields of missionary endeavor, where education is taking the place of the gospel; and culture, character-building, and various accomplishments are put in place of the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners!

Theological seminaries, in many instances, are hot-beds of infidelity. Schools and colleges are busy, as Harold Bolce graphically expressed it, in “blasting at the Rock of Ages.” The rising generation in so-called Christian lands bids fair to be a generation of Bible-rejectors. “The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and My people love to have it so, and what will ye do in the end thereof?” That *end* is almost upon us, and “When the Son of Man cometh shall He find the faith on the earth?” It is fast being supplanted by human speculations and “oppositions of science falsely so-called.”

The leaven of man-worship is rapidly leavening the whole lump and preparing the way for Antichrist who shall, if it were possible, deceive the very elect. Thank God, it is not possible; but it behooves every regenerated soul to hold fast to the revealed Word of God and utterly refuse the lying systems of the enemy. To sit in churches and listen to preachers of the apostasy, or to support such in any way, is treason against Christ! “He that biddeth him [the false teacher] God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”

It would be a great mercy if every converted person would refuse positively to listen twice to a minister who denies the inspiration of the Bible, or to give a penny to a church or a

missionary society that gave the right hand of fellowship to men of this type. To stay the on-rushing apostasy is impossible. To protest against it and to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness” is a positive duty.

Reader, let me press my point again.—The world-wide gospel proclamation and world-wide apostasy *at the same time* are clear proofs that the end is close upon us! It is too late to trifle. Let us be in earnest for the few remaining hours!

Another line of evidence is presented in the seven prophetic letters of Rev. 2 and 3. For that they *are* prophetic, and not merely moral—dispensational, and not simply local in their application—is a fact now familiar to many earnest students of the Scriptures. The proof of this is found in their exact correspondence with the seven stages of the history of the Church on earth. This is incontrovertible, however self-styled optimists may object to it—the objection being chiefly based on the fact that Laodicea closes the septenary series, thus precluding all thought of a triumphant Church and a converted world at the end of the dispensation. Yet the Church shall be triumphant; of that there should be no question. For our Lord Jesus has solemnly declared, “Upon this Rock (Christ as Son of the living God) I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” But between the Church of Christ’s building and the vast complex church of man’s devising there is a great difference. The real Church will be triumphantly raptured to glory ere the judgments fall on the great apostate mass of Laodicea.

I do not therefore attempt to prove by argument that the seven letters give us an outline of the Church’s course from apostolic days to the closing up of the present age. This has

been so well done by others that it would be on my part a work of supererogation to try to make it any more convincing.¹ I only desire in these necessarily brief pages to refresh the memory of my reader by pointing out how aptly those letters fit the history.

Ephesus then, from this view-point, presents the Church in apostolic days—an unworldly, called-out company who labored earnestly and well in making known the riches of grace, and who walked apart from iniquity; unable to bear those who were evil, as indeed these in turn could not endure the company of God's redeemed, for we read elsewhere, "Of the rest durst no man join himself to them." In those days of primitive simplicity men were tried by the testimony they brought, and if they spoke not according to the doctrine of Christ were rejected as "liars"—a "short and ugly word" that aptly designates many profane hucksterers of the Word of God to-day.

But the picture has its shadows too, for even during the very lifetime of the apostolic band declension began: the Church left her first love, and a somewhat mysterious form of evil, the "deeds of the Nicolaitanes," came in, though largely against the desire of the mass, for Ephesus is commended because of hatred to this unholy thing. Leaving their first love was losing the sense of Christ's presence: occupation with work, with service, took the place of heart-occupation with Himself. No sect of the Nicolaitanes is known, though some have tried to link the name with the reputed followers of an apostate Nicholas, traditionally held to be one of the seven of the 6th of Acts, who were set apart to serve tables. He is supposed to have taught his disciples that the indulgence of licentious

practices was not inconsistent with the grace of God. This, however, is very uncertain and largely conjectural. They seem to be right who consider “Nicolaitans” to be an untranslated Greek word, properly rendered “rulers of the people.” In that case Diotrephes of 3 John would be a typical Nicolaitane, who has had many successors. It would be the divine condemnation of the clerical system. Not yet had this system become an accepted doctrine, but the deeds manifested the spirit behind it. Crystallization into an accredited dogma came later (Rev. 2:15).

The second period followed apace, as set forth in the letter to Smyrna. It depicts, as by a few master-strokes, the tragedy of the Pagan persecutions in their efforts to crush Christianity beneath the iron heel of the Roman emperors, from Domitian to Diocletian. Nero’s persecution was local rather than general, but the monster who succeeded him set in motion a world-wide effort to destroy the Church of Christ. Historians count ten general persecutions, which are connected with ten main edicts of the emperors. The last under Diocletian went on for ten years, ceasing only with the death of the incapacitated tyrant. “Ye shall have tribulation ten days” seems to hint at this. But a suffering Church is more likely to be rich in faith than a Church fawned upon by the world; though in deepest poverty the Church in the Smyrna age was “rich,” and prospered, for as Augustine later said, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.” Those dark days were days of Christian devotion and heroism unparalleled save in similar times of suffering and danger. And yet the picture is not altogether bright, for the clear gospel of grace was largely obscured by the legal teaching of “those who said they were Jews and were not.” Such are a synagogue of Satan. Judaism

was a divine institution, Christianity is a divine revelation. But the strange mixture of Judaism with Christianity is of Satan. It is a corruption and a counterfeit; and “the corruption of the best thing is the worst of corruptions.”

Pergamos followed this, and gives us the period of the Church’s relief from persecution and her subsequent union with the world. It is the era of Constantine the Great and his successors, when the Church became the pet of the emperors (save for a brief period under Julian the Apostate), and Church and State were linked in an unholy alliance. Thus the Church sat at ease where Satan had his throne, clung to this for centuries, until the world itself wearied of her, and wrenched her from her place of power. He who is familiar with Church history can scarcely read the Pergamos letter without the vast pageant of the fourth century passing before the eye of his mind. The death of Diocletian; the temporary triumph of Maxentius; the Gallic legions hastening eastward led by Constantine; the famous vision of the fiery cross; the “*in hoc signo vinces*” portent; the Christians coming forth into the glare of publicity from the dens, caves and catacombs which had been their hiding places for so long; the bishops summoned to the general’s august presence; his endorsement of the new doctrine and intellectual conversion; the cross-led army driving all before it; the overthrow of Maxentius; Constantine hailed as Emperor of the world; proclaimed head of the church and *pontifex maximus* (the title of the head of the heathen hierarchy) ; the bishops seated among princes; the Church’s mourning over, her eyes dazzled by the unaccustomed luxury and splendor, basking in the imperial favor! Then the Arian controversy; Christ’s true deity denied, but maintained at the council of Nicea where despite

tremendous pressure the Church “held fast His Name, refusing to deny His faith.” Of Antipas personally we know nothing, but we see in his very name (which means “against all”) the trumpet-note of Athanasius who, when a later Arian emperor sought to persuade him to endorse the hated Unitarian heresy by crying, “All the world is against you,” in holy dignity exclaimed, “Then I am *against all* the world.”

The Balaam doctrine too was openly advocated by many in those days, and since—urging the mingling of clean and unclean, the unequal yoke of the Church and world, a spiritual marriage, which “Pergamos” seems to imply; while Nicolaitanism, or clerisy, had now become a full-blown doctrine, and the distinction between clergy and laity was at last complete. The Pergamos letter is a synoptic description of the conditions prevailing from the fourth to the seventh centuries.

And Thyatira followed as the natural result. Things were going down-hill with fearful rapidity. Yet the church of the middle ages was rich in works of mercy and abounded in “charity.” Her monasteries and hostelries dotted the lands and kept open house for the sick and distressed. But doctrinally she had deteriorated tremendously, and the Papal system was fully organized, becoming a church within the Church, to which all had to bow. It was the woman Jezebel teaching and leading the servants of God astray. As the heathen princess of old foisted her idolatry on Israel, so this false paganistic thing crowded out the Christianity of Christ and superseded it by a system unspeakably evil and inherently corrupt.

At the Reformation of the sixteenth century she was “given space to repent, but she repented not,” as the decrees of the Council of Trent bear witness. She spurned the light shining

from the newly-recovered Scriptures and continued in her idolatrous course. For “her children” there is naught but death, though grace ever has discerned even in Rome a remnant having not known the depths of Satan, whom a gracious Lord owns as His and commands to cling to what they have till He shall come. It is the first intimation that declension has gone so far that His return is now the only hope.

For Sardis, though it speak of Protestantism and its great State churches, is not a true recovery. They had received a deposit of truth at the Reformation, which became crystallized into creeds and confessions but did not quicken the mass. So of the great Protestant bodies it can be said, “Thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead,” for churchmanship has largely been substituted for new birth, and orthodoxy for conversion to God. Yet there are a few with garments undefiled who know the Lord and love His truth, and who are exhorted to *watch* for His coming again!

Philadelphia speaks of the great revival period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, assuming different forms in different places, but in all characterized by *reality*, by brotherly love, by clinging to Christ’s Word and honoring His Name who is the Holy and the True. They who take such ground will never be popular with the world or the world’s churches, but they will be content to know that God approves, and that the Lord Himself has opened for them a door of service which none on earth or anywhere else can shut. They wait in patience for the Morning Star—the Bridegroom’s symbolic title.

Laodicea closes the series. It is the solemn arraignment of latitudinarian Christianity with its pride and folly, marked by

impudent self-conceit and utter indifference to Christ. It glories in its breadth and culture, its refinements of thought, and its refusal of ancient formulas. It congratulates itself on its wealth and following, while, in His sight who stands knocking outside, it is “poor and wretched and blind and naked.” All the church machinery can go on without His presence, and without any sense of His absence.

And this is the last state of the professing body on earth. When things are in this condition, the Lord Himself will come, and will spew out of His mouth that which is so distasteful and disgusting to Him. “After this,” says John, “I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven.” As he is caught up through that open door he beholds surrounding the throne in glory the true Church seated in triumph, as symbolized in the twenty-four elders.

Laodicea is the closing period of the Church’s history, and who can doubt that we have now reached the very time depicted? It behooves us to act as men who wait for their Lord, knowing that His coming cannot be much longer delayed.

We have thus glanced at various scriptures having to do with the evidences in the professing church of the Lord’s near return. We must now look at some movements among the nations which point unquestionably to the same thing.

Part II: The Evidence that the Times of the Gentiles Have Nearly Run Their Course

The prophetic Scriptures are as a light shining in a dark place. So marvelously has God therein depicted the characteristics of the age in which we live, and the conditions that would prevail as its end drew near, that no reverent reader of the Bible need be left in the dark as to the place now reached in the history of the Gentile powers. Recent startling events are so fully in accord with what Spirit-taught servants of Christ have long seen foretold in Holy Writ as to be overwhelmingly convincing that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” He alone sees the end from the beginning and speaks of the things that are not as though they were. It is this feature of foretelling the future that differentiates the Bible from every other book. Human writers guess and theorize. God has by inspiration communicated facts which are attested by each passing year.

In this last respect, the book of Daniel stands preeminent. The 2nd and 3rd chapters give an outline of the times of the Gentiles from Nebuchadnezzar’s day to the setting up of Messiah’s kingdom. The four empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, as depicted in its earlier form, have risen and passed away as foretold. But a later form of the last empire is predicted to arise in the time of the end, immediately before the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the all-glorious Son of Man, as the Stone falling from heaven.

Now the last state of the fourth empire is to be brought about as a result of an effort to combine the iron of imperialism with

the miry clay (or, more correctly, brittle pottery) of democracy. This union—which can never be unity—of royal authority and socialistic principles characterizes the feet of the image even before the formation of the ten toes. This latter condition does not come in so long as the Church is still upon earth. It is subsequent to the rapture of the saints of the present dispensation. But the iron and clay are *already in evidence*, and statesmen are making desperate efforts to combine the two, after having learned, to their chagrin, in the last hundred or more years, that the “voice of the people,” if not “the voice of God,” is yet something to be reckoned with—is to be acknowledged and appeased if possible. With our Bibles open to the 2d chapter of Daniel, and the records of the present day before us, we do not hesitate to say that we are now in the iron and clay period, and at any moment the Lord’s assembling-shout may summon all that are Christ’s to the skies, after which the re-formation of the Roman empire in its last Satan-controlled condition will be a matter of but a very brief time, for “a short work will the Lord make in the earth.”

When, in past years, teachers of the Word of God have positively declared that the Scriptures foretold a new socialistic-empire formed of ten great kingdoms, on the ground of the Roman empire of old, many found it hard to take such predictions seriously. But the events of recent years, particularly since 1914, have wrought a wondrous change in the minds of men as to this. It is not only that the enlightened Bible believer declares such *must* be, but the secular press has taken up the matter, and it is being pointed out that the formation of a United States of Europe is *absolutely necessary* to safeguard the interests of all nations and to preserve the

peace of the world. This in itself is a remarkable sign of the times, and shows how rapidly the end is approaching.

The world-war demonstrated the need of some strong centralized government that could bring order out of the chaotic conditions which even the League of Nations seems unable to control. This League is in itself a step—and a long step—toward that very union of nations predicted by both Daniel and John in the Revelation. And the sudden rise to power of Mussolini is a startling evidence of how rapidly the kingdom of the Beast may be developed after the Church is gone. Already we hear of the revival of the Roman Empire, and this modern “man of destiny” declares that Rome shall soon be restored to its ancient splendors and will emulate the Empire of the Caesars in worldly power and glory.

We need, however, to be on our guard against hastily-arrived at and ill-considered conclusions. I have seen in print, and heard it affirmed by many, that Il Duce, Premier Mussolini of Italy, the great Fascist leader, is the predicted Antichrist, the Man of Sin, who should arise at the end of this age. This is quite unwarranted for a number of reasons. Mussolini is a civil leader, not the head of a religious system. Thus far his efforts to bring about a *rapprochement* with the papacy have been thwarted by the Pope himself. That some kind of a coup may be accomplished in the near future is not only possible but, in my judgment, probable. If so, it may result in the fulfilment of the seventeenth of Revelation, placing the mystic woman in the saddle, where for a brief time she will again dominate the Roman earth. But the Antichrist is the lamb-like Beast depicted in the last part of the thirteenth chapter. He is the imitation Lamb of God who is to be energized by Satanic

power. This one will utterly deny the Father and the Son. "This," says St. John, "is the deceiver and the antichrist." He will be accepted by apostate Christendom and apostate Judaism as the promised Messiah. His seat will be in Palestine; while, in the West, in the revived Roman Empire of the last days, there will be a great civil leader, a Napoleonic "Man of Destiny," who will for a brief time attempt to exercise autocratic sway over the civilized world. Both this leader, called emphatically, "the Beast," and the Antichrist are to act together as the enemies of God and His truth. But they are distinct personalities.

Mussolini, once a socialist of the reddest type, now the advocate of autocratic power, has already declared it is his intention to restore the ancient glory of the Roman Empire. Once an infidel, he has become a Catholic, and is eager that there be a concordat established between the Empire and the Vatican. The Fascist Creed, as it is called, is said to be the foundation of the instruction of the youth of Italy. It begins with, "I believe in Rome Eternal, the Mother of my Fatherland," and it ends with, "I believe in the genius of Mussolini; in our holy father Fascism, and in the communion of its martyrs; in the conversion of the Italians, and the resurrection of the Empire. Amen." Mussolini may be the forerunner of the Beast; he might even be that sinister figure himself, but it is better not to play the role of the prophet, but simply to be a humble student of the prophetic Word.

That we are on the eve of great world-changes both statesmen and religious leaders are agreed. The nature of those changes affords endless cause for speculation. For the devout Christian the next stupendous event that shines through the darkness is the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering

together unto Him. We do not wait for the Antichrist. We look for the Lord from heaven. We are only interested in the signs of the times as they harmonize with the warnings given whereby we may know that the end of the age is approaching.

In the last chapter of the book of Daniel there are three statements made which also have a bearing on the times in which our lot is cast. The angel says to the prophet: "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (ver. 4). Observe that three things are mentioned here, which if any one of them came to pass without the other two, would be of no real value in determining the question that is before us. But if *all* come to pass at *the same time* we must be convinced that God has spoken, and has pointed out unerringly three signs that the end-times are almost upon us. Note the three predictions: 1st, The end-times will be characterized by prophetic enlightenment, marvelously unsealing the book of Daniel, and the visions therein recorded understood by spiritual men. 2nd, There will be a period of world-wide restlessness: men will run to and fro as never before, owing doubtless to new and convenient methods of locomotion and insatiable desire for travel and adventure. 3rd, There will be a wide diffusion of knowledge—bringing educational advantages to the door of the poorest if there be but an ambition to learn and acquire. Now what are the facts? The last century has been more and more characterized by the very things mentioned. It is not that these things are occasionally fulfilled, but that they are everywhere apparent in the civilized parts of the world. Here then is a three-fold cord that cannot be quickly broken. Insignificant as any one of these facts might seem if it stood alone, *the combination of the*

three at one and the same time is the startling fact. Man's day is nearly at an end. The day of the Lord comes on apace!

Now link on to this evidence a New Testament prophecy that clearly applies to the same times. Turn to 1 Thess. 5: 2, 3. "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." Here is a strikingly convincing statement, if received in literality as it is written. The day of the Lord is going to break upon the world at some special time, foreknown by God, when men will be talking loudly of Peace and Safety! These are the very themes talked of on every hand for the last decade, and, despite the fearful European tragedy, are heard more loudly to-day than ever. Men of affairs are loudly proclaiming a coming era of universal peace to be brought in by arbitration, treaties, and the evolutionary forces of society, while the day of the Lord steals on them unawares in overflowing judgments to cut off the ungodly from the earth, at the very time that universal peace and safety become the slogan of a world devoted to destruction. All man's efforts to make this world a happy and peaceful scene, while still rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ, are futile and vain. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

It is not to those who wait for the return of His Son from heaven that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night, but to those who ignore His Word and despise His grace. "Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief...therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober."

And if we would watch intelligently it is necessary that we be able, through familiarity with the Word of God, to discern aright the signs of the times. In three short verses our Lord Himself has given us a marvelous epitome of the conditions that would prevail immediately before the great tribulation. Weigh carefully Matt. 24:5-7, and ask yourself if anything could more aptly describe the days in which we live. "For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places." With this, couple the equally pertinent words of Lk. 21:25, 26: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves 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 shall be shaken."

The context makes it clear that these are the outward evidences of the near approach of the end-times. They do not definitely fix the time when the Lord must come. They simply show that the days of vengeance are coming on apace. And one might fearlessly challenge anyone to give us a better description of our own days than we have in these verses, taking brevity into consideration.

Note the leading features of the two passages:

First: Many Antichrists. It might be said that there has never been a time since the very days of the apostles that this sign has not been manifested; and this I readily admit. But in a

certain sense the whole Christian dispensation is marked by all those things predicted by our Lord, for ever since apostolic days men have lived in what John calls “the last hour.” The greater part of earth’s time or course has been run; only the last hour remains ere the kingdom be ushered in. But while this is so, we gather that the characteristic features of the age will be accentuated at the close. And so it is at the present solemn moment. We hear of antichrists on every hand, and those who are deceived thereby may well be called legion! In all lands these false Christs are found. In America we have witnessed the “powers and signs and lying wonders” connected with the system miscalled Christian Science, which venerated its woman-founder as the second coming of Christ, and holds its false philosophy to be the promised Comforter, thus blaspheming against the Holy Ghost. Lesser lights have flickered and flamed up, then died down, leaving hosts of disappointed dupes, like Dowie, the pseudo-prophet of Chicago; Sanford, the Elijah of New England; Dr. Teed, the Koresh; and others too numerous to mention; and as they pass away, other deceivers take their places, for men would rather believe any lie than God’s truth.

When the Persian antichrist, Abbas Effendi, or Abdul Bahai, toured America and Europe, he was welcomed as the forerunner of universal peace and accorded the liberty of proclaiming his propaganda from “Christian” pulpits. And though, like other pretenders before him, he has passed away, his followers still abound in a land of Bibles, and hope by the dissemination of his principles to bring in a millennial condition while refusing the cross!

Some years ago Mrs. Annie Besant, the aged Theosophical leader, formed the Order of the Star of the East, a Theosophical off-shoot, to wait for a great religious leader—a new incarnation of the Spirit of the Christ. The mountain has labored and brought forth—Krishnamurti! Yet vast numbers of otherwise intelligent people accept the drivellings of this colorless youth as the very utterances of inspiration!

Other “coming ones,” too numerous to mention, engage the thoughts of men. But it is for Antichrist, not the Christ of God, they wait. The Lord of glory, when He comes again, descends from heaven. The false prophet comes from the earth—born in a natural way.

Second: Scripture predicts a period of terrible unrest and internecine warfare as an evidence that the world is entering “the beginning of sorrows.” A few years ago men were flattering themselves that the world would never again be desolated by great wars and wholesale slaughter. It was confidently believed that the social consciousness of the laboring class would make it impossible to hurl great armies against each other. Peace propaganda had so educated the people of all civilized nations that war would soon be outlawed. In the very month that the great 1914-1918 European conflict broke out, the organ of the Peace Society published in Toronto, contained an ably-written article declaring that war was now an impossibility, and a great world-conflict could never occur again! Clergymen, oblivious of prophetic truth as revealed in Scripture, and carried away by the loose, liberal theological systems of the day, were loudly voicing the same empty boast up to the very day that the devastating carnage began.

And now that comparative peace has succeeded to bloody warfare the same unbelieving views are being taught from many pulpits. Yet ever since the signing of the treaty of Versailles the nations have been feverishly preparing for “the next great war”—building navies, enlisting soldiers, storing ammunition—all for what? Universal peace? Nay, but for the wars and rumors of wars of the closing days of this age, and for the great Armageddon conflict yet to be fought out in the land of Palestine, when all nations shall be drawn into the fray. While every Christian should be grateful to God for the comparative peace now enjoyed, it needs to be remembered it is but a temporary truce, for there can be no lasting peace while Christ is rejected—nor until all Gentile dominions are destroyed and He shall come whose right it is to reign.

In the third and fourth places we read of famines and pestilences, the very natural outcome of war, which have reaped fearful harvests since the great world-war, though the science and skill of the world are endeavoring to successfully cope with them. Many high-spirited and noble-minded physicians and nurses laid down their lives in the overpowering conflict in trying to hinder the on-rushing pestilence, while the charity of the world was strained in its efforts to check the ravages of famine—and what may it not yet be in the near future? The black and pale horses of famine and pestilence always follow the red horse of battle.

In Luke’s account we get the fifth sign that the end is drawing near, calamities such as the world has never previously known. Were the dreams of evolution true, we should long since have passed earth’s formative period, but events of recent years show us that this very globe is going through great and

momentous changes, preparatory to the conditions prophesied of for millennial times. Surely never have there been so many terrible disasters on land and sea as since the midnight cry summoned the virgin band to trim their lamps. Earthquakes, tidal waves and kindred phenomena have occurred with amazing frequency. Is it any wonder that we see the sixth sign on every hand?—"Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." Confidence is shaken. Nations are bewildered and perplexed. Pledges even of nations are violated, and promises broken. Individuals are in fear and dismay where a cheery spirit of optimism prevailed but a short time ago. Yet, amidst it all, the Christian need not be in perplexity or doubt. The Word of God has forewarned of all this. Minutely it has foretold existing conditions, and the fulfilment of its solemn prophecies should only strengthen the faith of the believer as he turns from all men's empty vamping to the unerring and inerrant Word of God.

This spirit of unrest to which we have referred, is particularly manifested in the strained relations between capital and labor. Despite the evident desire of many modern captains of industry to better the conditions of their employees, and to practise what a recent writer has called "the golden rule in business," capital and labor still maintain a distinctly hostile attitude the one to the other; and the economic questions involved seem no nearer a peaceful and satisfactory solution than in the days when the apostle James wrote his intensely practical epistle.

In that letter there is a passage which, while it unquestionably applied directly to conditions then existing, was so worded by

the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as to graphically depict industrial conditions at the end of the age. This is not so manifest on the page of the Authorized Version as in the Kevision, or any critical translation. An evidently mistaken rendering of one preposition is responsible for this in the King James Version. This preposition, correctly rendered in later versions, throws a flood of light on the whole passage. It is the word rendered “for” in the earlier translation and “in” in the later ones, occurring in the last sentence of James 5: 3. Read the passage in its entirety:

“Come now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your wealth has become corruption, and your garments moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are rusted; and their rust shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. Ye have heaped up treasure together *in the last days*.” Note the corrected preposition, and observe where in the course of time, it locates the complete fulfilment of that concerning which the Holy Spirit speaks so solemnly. The passage continues: “Behold, the wages of the laborers who have reaped your fields which is of you kept back unjustly, crieth; and the cries of those that have reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts. Ye have lived in luxury upon the earth, and have been wanton; ye have pampered your hearts [as] in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned, ye have killed the righteous; he doth not resist you. Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until it receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (chap. 5:1-8, 1911 Version).

As by a master hand, the apostle with a few bold strokes, pictures the times in which we live. On the one hand, haughty wealth; on the other, grinding poverty; on the one hand, scornful indifference; on the other, angry dissatisfaction. On the one hand, wanton waste; on the other, bitter need. Such contrasts have ever been common in this world's sad history, but never were they so accentuated as at the present time when the rich are growing richer and the poor are growing poorer, and the great gulf between the two classes is steadily widening. Ours has been called, and not without reason, the millionaire age. If our grandfathers were worth a few thousands, they were counted well-to-do. Now men hold securities mounting into the millions, while even a billion of money may be heaped together by one man. Statistics show that the great bulk of the world's wealth is held subject to the order of a little coterie of arrogant plutocrats, who conniving together can control the resources of the nations, and make or prevent financial panics at their will. It is a condition of affairs never before known, and tells us with absolute certainty that we are in the last days.

Nor should I be misunderstood in writing as I have done. It is no sin to be rich, nor is a man necessarily a malefactor because he possesses the ability to amass great wealth. But wealth is a stewardship, and "it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." He to whom riches are entrusted is accountable to God for the use to which he puts them. Their selfish conservation He will judge unsparingly. James arraigns the rich for their greed and self-indulgence. They had forgotten the word, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity" (Eccl. 5:10). They were living as though

accountable to no higher power, and were eagerly seeking to gratify every lust. Their hoarded treasure, corrupting, moth-eaten, and rusting, witnessed to their sordid selfishness. And this mass of wealth would soon have been largely dissipated had they but dealt in fairness with the laborers on the fruits of whose toil they were fattening. Those thus down-trodden have often felt as though God had forgotten, and in their despair have often denied His very existence. But “when He maketh inquisition for blood He forgetteth not the cry of the humble.” He has been a silent but not unfeeling spectator of the injustice, the heartlessness, and the haughty arrogance of the godless rich. He has noted every tear, heeded every sigh, heard every cry of oppression from the anguished hearts of the downtrodden whose rights have been ruthlessly disregarded by those who should have been to them the instruments of Providence for their protection and blessing. The same spirit that has thus ill-used the poor and needy is the spirit that condemned and slew the Righteous One. It comes to its full fruition in the last days. It will be judged unsparingly when the Lord arises to plead the cause of the afflicted.

But what is to be the Christian’s attitude in such conditions as are here described? Is he to link himself with labor unions and industrial associations of various kinds, generally composed of Christless men guilty of violence and even murder, in order to curb the greed and check the tyranny of soulless corporations and capitalists preying on the laboring classes? Is he to oppose force to tyranny, the boycott to oppression, and the strike to employers’ arrogance? By no means. His path is indicated clearly and unequivocally in verses 7 to 12. “The coming of the Lord draw-eth nigh.” Till then the believer is exhorted to

patience and to trust in the living God. He is not to be carried away by the spirit of the age. Complaints, grudges, harsh invectives, are not to come from him who sides with a rejected Christ and waits for His return from heaven. Of old, the prophets had to learn this lesson of patience, suffering for righteousness' sake, committing their cause to the Lord; ever proving His faithfulness in spite of all man's unfaithfulness. And they who so endured we count happy, even as was Job the servant of the Lord whose patience has become proverbial, and in whose later history we see "the end of the Lord" and are assured that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy.

Till He comes the Christian can well afford to stand aside from the restless, surging movements of the day; and, committing his cause to the Lord with quietness of heart, he is to let the potsherds of the earth strive with the potsherds of the earth, knowing that God has said, "I will overturn, overturn, OVERTURN it, until HE shall come, whose right it is to reign." That that glad day has now drawn very near the conditions we have been considering would be sufficient to clearly prove.

But there is another line of evidence, having to do particularly with the nations of Israel, at which we must now look, and with which the next chapter will occupy us.

Part III: Evidence from Israel's History and Present State that Points to the Speedy Consummation of This Age

If the evidence we have been considering shows that the Church of God is soon to close its earthly history, and that the Gentile dominions must shortly surrender their lease of power to Him who shall reign as King of kings and Lord of lords, that which Israel's past and present condition furnishes is of an even more startling character. The Lord Jesus said to His eager, inquiring disciples, in that great prophetic discourse which we have already noticed in part, "Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When its branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors" (Matt. 24: 32, 33). And again in the companion passage in Luke, we are told, "He spake unto them a parable; Behold the fig tree and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh. So likewise ye, when ye see these things being fulfilled, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh" (Luke 21:29-31). Mark 13:28, 29 is almost the exact counterpart of Matthew.

Now why does our Lord direct special attention to the fig tree? Is it not because it is the particular symbol of Judah, which was likened to "a fig tree planted in a vineyard?" See Luke 13:6-10. "The vineyard of the Lord of host is the house of Israel," as depicted in Isaiah 5:1-7. Because of their sin the Lord rooted out the vines of all the twelve tribes and left His vineyard desolate. After the Babylonian captivity Judah was planted as a fig tree in the desolated vineyard. Christ Himself nurtured this

fig tree in the three years of His ministry. He came seeking fruit, only to find none. When this was manifested as the settled condition, and “nothing but leaves” was found, the fig tree fell under the curse, and withered from the root. But, in the last days, the fig tree of Judah is to revive and to put forth leaves and bear fruit. When revival is noticed, the end will be near. This is the clear teaching of the Lord in the “parable of the fig tree.” As we look upon the Jewish nation to-day, who can fail to see the leaves and fruit both pushing out from the stock which has been dry so long? Judaism is experiencing a revival of the national spirit, and, as never since apostolic days, Jews are turning in heart to the Lord whom they once rejected.

The national revival might be likened to the green leaves. The spiritual awakening would more readily answer to the developing fruit.

We look first at the “leaves.” For centuries, Jewish history has been the verification of prophecy. Israel, scattered and peeled, have been outcasts among all nations; a people despised and scorned; yet provoking the envy of their Gentile neighbors, and a certain feeling of awe likewise. There is something about the undying Jewish people which the nations cannot comprehend. The Jew assimilates with none, yet pervades all. He is the unquestionable “man of destiny,” for he represents that race, or “generation” which shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled.

Persecuted and oppressed, it is true to-day as in Egyptian times that “the more they afflicted them the more they multiplied and grew.” Yet, though the Jew has ever secretly cherished the hope of a coming Messiah and restoration to

Palestine, for centuries his national spirit seemed utterly crushed, and he lacked the sense of solidarity which alone can assure the integrity of any nation. Yet in his most wretched estate the Jew has never become identified with the peoples among whom he wandered. We speak of men of other lands, naturalized in another country, as German-Americans, or Anglo-Americans, or Scotch-Canadians, and so on. But we do not speak of Jewish-Britons, or Jewish-Americans, or Jewish-Germans, etc. Instead we know them as American Jews, English Jews, Russian Jews, and so on. Wherever born, they are *Jews*, and only *Jews*.

The last century has intensified this national feeling in a marvelous way, and resulted in the birth of the world-wide Zionist movement, having for its avowed object the return of the Jews as a nation to Palestine, the acquirement of their ancient patrimony, and the foundation of an in-dependent Jewish State—possibly a protectorate, under the care of one or more of the great world-powers.

Has the recent fearful war in Europe jeopardized these plans or disheartened the Jew? Did the accompanying season of intense suffering in Palestine make such a scheme seem foolish and futile? Not at all. More than ever the Jewish spirit asserted itself. More than ever the Jews felt they must establish a Hebrew commonwealth.

During the fearful world-conflict Jews were fighting in the ranks of all the great opposing armies. They suffered terribly whichever side won, and since the signing of the peace pact they have endured unspeakable horrors of persecution, famine and pestilence in many parts of Europe. As long as present conditions prevail, the Jew is caught as it were between the

upper and nether millstones. He does not want to be found in such a plight again. To avoid it he sees only one way; that is, to become once more an independent nation.

And the war itself opened the way for the first great steps toward the fulfilment of their national aspiration. The Balfour declaration guaranteed a home in Palestine for Israel in return for Jewish loyalty to the Allies in their struggle with Germany. The successful outcome of General, now Lord, Allenby's great campaign made possible the fulfilment of this promise. The British mandate over the Holy Land has opened the door to the re-settlement of the "people of the wandering foot" in their ancient patrimony. In spite of the opposition of the Arabs and the Roman Catholic Church, the Jew is rapidly taking over the land. Jewish colonies and cities are rising in the once-desolate places and the Scriptures are being literally fulfilled in a way that is amazing to one who does not understand the divine plan. The land is being planted with "strange slips," as Isaiah declared it would be, and once more Palestine is becoming a land of vineyards and olive-yards and a country of Jewish homes. The past ten years have seen marvelous developments. What the near future has in store no man can say. The establishment of Hebrew schools, the revival of the ancient language, the opening of the great Hebrew University on the Mount of Olives are the forerunners of a marvelous Hebrew renaissance. The Jews are returning by thousands every year, and in spite of certain difficulties and trying situations economically, which are to be expected in connection with such a movement, the Jewish population is steadily increasing, and gradually the land is coming into their possession.

Prophecy has foretold all this. The Jews are to be gathered back in unbelief to their own land by the help of some great maritime power (see Isa. 18), and given a place in the councils of the nations. Before our very eyes we see all heading up toward this consummation. The fig tree is putting forth her leaves. The national life-sap, if I may so put it, is once more manifesting itself in the one-time dry and desolate tree of Judah. And this is the sure indication that the period of Gentile domination is fast drawing to a close.

Money is flowing into the coffers of the Zionist societies. Influential Jews hitherto indifferent, because largely agnostic and rejecting their own Scriptures, are giving their countenance and aid to a scheme that once seemed to them visionary and absurd. National feeling has wrought where of religious feeling there was none. And thus men who believe not the prophets are fulfilling them in their ignorance.

And now I desire to press the solemn truth that all this forces upon us. The coming of the Lord *must* be very near, for the prophetic scriptures give us no reason to believe that such a condition of things as we have depicted above, will be brought about *so long as the Church is on earth*. But time speeds on, and preparations are fast taking place for the final re-gathering of Israel and their establishment in their own land *after the Church has gone*. And the Church will be caught away from this scene at the coming of the Lord to the air; hence the solemnity of the sign of the green leaves! The Midnight Cry sounds louder each passing day!

“Trim your lamps and be ready,
For the Bridegroom’s nigh.”

We turn our attention now to what is evident fruit for God from among the Jews, so long blinded and indifferent to the light of the gospel.

And first, be it noted, we do not slight the fact that all down the centuries of the Christian dispensation there has ever remained an election of grace, God in every period saving some who turned in repentance to the Messiah whom their fathers abhorred. But such conversions were lamentably few, and the great bulk of the nation has ever remained in wilful and judicial blindness. This is still the case, we must frankly admit; but we believe we can safely say that there are more Jewish Christians in the world to-day than at any time since the earliest centuries of the Church's history. The past hundred years have been years of grace to the blinded nation in a most marked way—witness the awakening of the Church of God generally to its responsibility to give the gospel to the Jew, through whom the Scriptures were first given to the Gentiles.

To the shame of Christendom, be it said, that its treatment of the Jew in past centuries, and in many places still, has been most *un-Christlike*, and utterly opposed to the spirit of the Saviour's intercession on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Too often it has been taken for granted that work for the conversion of Israel would be but wasted effort, because of the blindness referred to in Rom. 11; but it has been quite generally overlooked that the blindness was not to be entire, but "in part."

In these last days the Christian has realized his indebtedness to the Jew in a way he had hitherto overlooked, and efforts have been put forth by voice and pen to carry the gospel to

this much-neglected people; efforts which God has graciously deigned to bless in a marvelous way. From the days when one of the first modern missions to the Jews was begun in Hungary, in the middle of the last century, to the present time, work of this character has come more and more into prominence, claiming the help and prayerful sympathy of those who know the Lord. There have been many, many mistakes and blunders; unprincipled men have used such work as a means of self-aggrandizement and self-enrichment, and thus dishonor has been brought upon the name of the Lord. But, alas, what line of missionary enterprise has escaped this stigma? “Evil men and seducers” have abounded in all lines of professed Christian service; but this sad fact does not invalidate what is truly of God. So we praise Him for the devotion of many faithful lovers of Israel, who have labored for the conversion of the neglected Jew.

And what have been the results? Only eternity will make the full fruitage known; but not only hundreds, but thousands, from among Israel after the flesh have already turned to the Lord showing that the blindness in part is passing away. Among these are many eminent names—some now with the Lord, others still engaged in His service on earth. Who can estimate the value to the Church of God of an Edersheim, a David Baron, an Adolph Saphir, a Joseph Rabinowitz, and a host of others, whose lives and labors were fragrant with Christ? And to these may be added a great multitude of the lowly and unknown on earth who have been led to joyfully own the claims of the Lord Jesus, and to suffer shame and ostracism for His name’s sake.

“Not Barabbas, but *this Man!*” exclaimed a dying Jew; and in so doing he reversed the sentence of his nation, and proclaimed himself on the side of the long-rejected Saviour. And he was not alone, for his brethren and sisters in the faith from among Israel are now legion. It is estimated that in the first decade after the close of the World War over 200,000 Jews had professed Christianity. Many of these are really born again and are active in trying to reach others.

Remembering this, let it be borne in mind that the Holy Ghost predicts the blindness passing away when the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come in. If already the scales are falling from the eyes of many of the Jews, does it not proclaim the fact that the Gentile times are nearly expired, and that “the fulness of the Gentiles” will soon have come in? The “*times of the Gentiles*” will not run out until Messiah comes to establish His throne at Jerusalem; but the *fulness* of the Gentiles comes in at our Lord’s return for His Church.

Between the two, the awful time of Jacob’s trouble intervenes, “the great tribulation,” toward which events are so rapidly tending. The *times* of the Gentiles cannot end until Jerusalem has been delivered from Gentile oppression and become the city of the Great King. But the *fulness* of the Gentiles may come in ere my reader lays down this paper; for it will take place when the unbelieving branches are torn away from the olive tree of privilege, and that will be when the true believers have been caught up to be forever with the Lord. If this momentous event were to take place ere this paper drops from your hand, my unknown reader, I ask you kindly, but solemnly, what would it mean to you?

You cannot be ready for His second coming unless you have been saved through the mighty work He accomplished at His first coming. It is written, “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9: 28). None look for Him except those who value His atoning work and have been redeemed to God by His most precious blood. Are you numbered among these? If not, I earnestly beseech you, weigh well the Midnight Cry:

“Behold, the Bridegroom Cometh;
Go Ye Out to Meet Him!”

—H. A. I.

Notes

1. The inquiring reader is referred to “The Prophetic History of the Church,” by F. W. Grant, 35 cts. Same publishers.



To God be the glory.