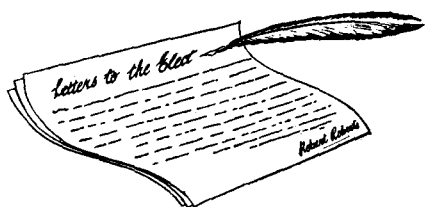


*Letters to the
Elect of God
in Time of Trouble*

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THE POWER OF EXAMPLE

Seeing we are encompassed with such a great cloud of witnesses, let us get rid of every impediment and the sin that ensnares us so easily, and let us run steadily the course mapped out for us, with our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith who, in view of the joy that lay ahead for him, submitted to the cross, thought nothing of the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Compare your experience with his, who was willing to stand so much hostility from sinners against himself, so that you may not become weary and despondent.

In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted so that it has cost you blood, and you have been forgetful of the appeal that speaks to you as sons: "My son, do not think lightly of the Lord's discipline, neither become discouraged under His reproof; for the Lord disciplines the person He loves and punishes every son whom He receives." You must endure for the sake of correction; God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom the father does not discipline? If you receive no correction, such as all sons share, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

— Hebrews 12:1-8 (Berkeley and A.V.).

Why We Made This Book

This book was made for a single purpose: to provide comfort and encouragement at a difficult time.

The notion came to us one evening, after a particularly trying day. We were feeling extremely tired and jaded, and were also faced with a flood of letters containing their usual crop of problems, appeals and accusations. The latter were based on ignorance of facts, and misunderstanding of motives and circumstances; but we could see that some wrote from a genuine desire to help, and felt quite justified in the stand they adopted.

At the time we lacked the energy to argue our case; but we did feel a desire to offer a word of encouragement to brethren and sisters of goodwill, quite apart from any controversy.

But how best to do it? We did not feel that words of ours would be acceptable at that time, and wondered whether we could draw upon those of our pioneers.

We then recalled a series of letters that Brother Roberts had written at a particularly difficult Ecclesial crisis which he entitled: "To the Elect of God in a Time of Trouble." They had greatly helped us when we first read them, particularly as we considered their background. Perhaps we could reproduce them in *Logos* and so extend a message of help in time of need.

But when we again examined them, we found that they were too long for that purpose.

Then, we thought, why not produce them altogether in more permanent book form, so that, whenever any are depressed or overwhelmed with sorrow because of distressing circumstances, they only have to stretch out their hand to find a measure of help from the pen of one who had gone through similar difficulties.

This is that book.

We hope the reader is comforted and encouraged by its contents, and that it will lead him to seek that greater help that the Word itself can provide, especially when supplemented by prayer. Trouble can be most beneficial if viewed aright. It can humble us; drive us to the Father; help to put power into prayer; cause us to seek encouragement by recalling the privileged position that we occupy in our relationship to the Father and the Son, and the grand vision of glory free from trouble which the future holds out for true sons and daughters of God.

We trust that this book may assist you to see things in that light.

— H. P. Mansfield.

West Beach, August 1970.



A further sixteen years of agonising for the Kingdom have passed since we published this book. The troubles, ecclesially, seem to have intensified with the passage of time. Certainly the need for comfort in adversity has not lessened. So we produce a further edition of this book. But we add to it a series of articles prepared by Brother Roberts: *Christ On Earth Again*. A contemplation of the relief to trouble that will follow the apocalypse of the Lord Jesus in the earth gives substance to any words of comfort that may be expressed. By contemplating the future we are better able to imitate Paul's attitude: "Forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13).

— H. P. Mansfield.

West Beach, April 1986.

**FIRST LETTER
TO THE ELECT
OF GOD
IN A TIME OF TROUBLE**

**FOR THOSE WHO
ARE DEPRESSED**

10th January, 1885

BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE

Many are the benefits which flow from affliction. The Scriptures bid us receive it, in view of this fact, in the spirit of thankfulness and resignation — “Be patient in tribulation” (Rom. 12:12); “Count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations” (Jas. 1:2) reckon yourselves “happy” when having to share the sufferings of Christ (1 Peter 4:13,14); “Rejoice and be exceeding glad” when persecuted for Christ’s sake (Matt. 7:12). To reach this mind is a matter of spiritual education. Only where enlightenment in Bible revelation exists, and where faith in that revelation is operative, can the right disposition be exhibited. Where these conditions are lacking, affliction will be resented and cursed, and explained (after the manner of the man of the world) on purely natural principles. This ailment and that worry will find a cause altogether away from the working of a kind and all-wise Providence. The part which God performs will be ignored. Should, perchance, some good be discerned as the outcome of affliction, then it will be attributed to “accident” or “luck.” Christ has forewarned us that tribulation will turn some from the way (Matt. 13:21); let us therefore take heed. But the right mind can be attained, and to reach it will be our credit and happiness. The history of the early disciples shows what is possible in this direction (Acts 5:41; Heb. 10:34; Rom. 5:3). The words of Paul are particularly edifying: “I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake” (2 Cor. 12:9-10). Outside of this list not much remains to be mentioned in the way of affliction.

— A.T.J.

Counsel for the Depressed

The elect of God exist, although no man can individually identify them. They are after a common family likeness, though differently situated in the present evil world. They have one faith, and one aim, and one mind, though following different occupations, and living in different parts of the earth. We greet them in the name of the Lord, wishing them and praying for them grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

THOSE TO WHOM THE LETTER IS ADDRESSED BELOVED,

You are known of God, though you may not be discerned by man. You are scattered up and down the world, in a cloudy and dark day, undistinguishable to the human eyes, from the common mass of mankind. Your divine mark or seal, wherever you are to be found, consists of the belief, obedience and love of the truth which God has caused to be set forth in the writings of Moses, and the prophets, and the apostles. Having this mark, you are precious in His eyes. Your faith is well-pleasing to Him; your obedience, your free-will offerings, your sacrifices in his service at the time when all the world ignores Him ascend before Him as the odour of a sweet smell, and are acceptable to Him through the High Priest of our profession.

And they will be spoken of again to your great joy, in a day when they will seem to have been all forgotten, and when they will seem too small to be mentioned in the presence of the world-stirring events that will belong to the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I write to you concerning our common affliction — common in a large sense. I do not write to you because I know you. Some of you, I doubtless know; but no man knows you as “the Lord knows them that are His.” A man cannot even know himself in this sense — as our beloved brother Paul has said, “I judge not mine own self: he that judgeth me is the Lord.” We know the principles upon which men will be saved, because they have been revealed: but we are not capable of discerning infallibly where

these principles have had their effectual work, though we may discern where they are set aside and violated.

I write to you as those whom the Lord loves, and who will be banded together in a joyous company when the Lord comes.

I write to you, as one of you, having the same experience and the same need. The scorner may mockingly enquire what right I have to write to such. I answer, the right of brotherly love, which belongs to every man who can rise to his privileges in Christ. Brotherly love leads to brotherly concern in all things, but particularly in those that relate to our standing in God, our position in the present probation, and our hope concerning the purpose of God which will surely be accomplished. Your present lot is grievous in many respects; and at times you are greatly cast down, and nigh despairing altogether of the Lord's promised kindness in Christ.

ENCOURAGEMENT IN TROUBLE

I write to remind you of the cause you also have for encouragement and joy.

You feel unworthy of the great salvation to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ: remember, that though those only whom the Lord esteems worthy will enter the kingdom, yet part of that worthiness consists in that very sense of unworthiness which oppresses you. God's favour is for those who rate themselves at God's standard; and by this standard we are, as Jacob confessed himself to be "unworthy of the least of all the mercy and the truth" that the Lord shows to His people. For what are we at best but worms of the earth, fashioned in God's image, made of His clay, and permitted to live for a few years on the face of this glorious earth? The most righteous man can say with Job, whom the Lord approved, "Behold I am vile . . . wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." If a righteous man could feel this abasement — (most reasonable abasement in mortal flesh in the presence of the divine glory) — is it a marvel that we who add error to weakness, and sin to corruptibility, should sometimes feel "broken in heart and contrite in spirit"? It is right: but be not destroyed by this abasement. It is pleasing to God. To such He has more than once plainly declared He looks with approval.

But your sins, they distress you: it is right they should: but look again and be comforted. There is a sin not unto

death. You are not callous towards the Lord. You do not run in the ways He has forbidden. You do not love the present world and run with it in all its "ungodliness and worldly lusts — the lust of the eye and the pride of life." You do not deny God and live in deliberate disobedience of His commandments. On the contrary, you love His name and His word; you believe His testimonies, and rejoice in His institutions; you love, and look, and long for the appearing of His Son, whom He has promised to send; and you are striving in all the ways of life, so far as in you lies, to do His will as expressed in His commandments. But you fail often. You come short of what you would do. You frequently do the things you would not do: and you are distressed on this account. It is right to be so: but do not forget the provision that has been made: Christ has taken away your sins. We are washed in his blood. He stands in the Father's presence, not only as the accepted sacrifice, but as the appointed high priest for His house. He ever liveth to make intercession for us, according to the will of God. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to forgive us all our iniquities. If we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sins. God forgives us for Christ's sake.

Perhaps you are oppressed with a sense of the unsuitability of such persons as you, being promoted to honour and power in the kingdom of God. Remember, it is God's deliberate plan to make choice of such. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called . . . but God hath chosen the weak things of this world." Jesus spoke of this, and said: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." He even gave thanks to the Father for proceeding on this plan. There is a reason in it all. The kingdom is to be established for God's honour, not man's: for the Spirit's objects and not those of the flesh. Hence, it is a necessity that men be provided for its administration who are not proud and lifted up in their own eyes, but who are lowly, and who know and reverence God so deeply as to find pleasure in His exaltation. The blessing of man will come out of it all, but glory to God first.

GOD MAKES CHOICE OF THE HUMBLE

If God made choice of the aristocracy, His purpose ("I will be exalted among the heathen") would not be accomplished. They are full of themselves. He chooses men who are empty of themselves, that they may be full of God.

Poor men, in a day of evil, are the kind of material out of which He can provide the earthen vessels, in which His eternal treasure can be deposited, "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of man."

But you say, "Such poor weak people as we, are not fit to be kings and priests." True: not as you are now, It is not as you are now that you will be elevated to the position. You will be changed from the mortal to the immortal, and this change will fit you in every way for what you will have to do. It will give you strength and grace and capacity and gladness of heart. You will be able to carry yourselves as kings, and to sustain yourselves without fatigue, and to bring the wisdom of Solomon to bear in the judgment of all matters you may have in charge. Qualification of this sort is all in God, who will liberally crown His children with the highest gifts, in the day of their exaltation. The one thing needful is a humble, loving, obedient heart, and pliant will, which can only be developed and put to the proof by the exercise of faith in a day like this; and the operation can only be successfully performed, in most cases, in circumstances of poverty and self-denial. Consequently, your lowly position and inefficient state, instead of being a cause of dubitation, should help your confidence, as furnishing in your case, the likely elements of suitability for the glory to be revealed.

FAITH IS REQUIRED OF US ALL

But in another way, you may feel the cloud return. The time is long, and human nature is weak, and power fails, and you feel yourselves walking towards the darkness which bounds the horizon of all natural life; yea the darkness will oftentimes steal into the inmost soul, and fill you with an indescribable horror, as you survey the vastness of the universe, in which God is apparently silent, and the almost infinite mass of abortive life that appears upon earth from generation to generation. Be comforted concerning this also: this darkness is inseparable from God's plan. Nay more; it is essential to it. Human life on the earth can no more reach the glory to be revealed without this experience, than the fruits of the field can appear without ploughing and harrowing. It is part of the plan. God's wisdom is in it, and His love, for God is love. We shall see it. Meanwhile we must exercise faith, without which He cannot be pleased. Faith working by love can see a little even now — by starlight as it were. The darkness is prolonged

for the world as a whole; but it is short for any generation. It has been on the earth for ages, but no generation lasts for ages. We knew nothing of it last century; our turn had not come. Our turn has now come: it depresses, but it will soon be over, and when over, the next thing in our experience (apparently the immediate next) if actually delayed however long, is the eternal sunshine of the Father's manifested presence, power and glory. We shall find then what has been done for us by our present exposure in the darkness and cold of earth's winter. It is the Father's appointment for us meanwhile. What can we say but, "Thy will be done"? He doth not willingly afflict. Not only so, but He ministers to our need while we pass through the darkness. None of the elect of God is left alone. God is with him to guide and strengthen in many invisible ways. God cares for him; pities him; chastens him; upholds him; prepares him for the inheritance that is in store for all the sons of light: an inheritance in which they will commune with unspeakable joy, after the prolonged and bitter fight of faith victoriously waged in their several evil days.

"These are they that came out of great tribulation." We cannot come out of it without being in it first. While in it, it is hard to bear. But remember the end. Remember the joyful muster of the Lord's elect.

DO NOT BE DEPRESSED BY PRESENT CONDITIONS

This touches another sorrow you have. In your several spheres of probation, you are yearning for what you never realise. You hunger and thirst for the prevalence of a noble enlightenment among men. You love God yourselves with all your hearts and souls. You long to see others rejoice in Him and exalt Him in a sincere and intelligent way. You have a compassionate regard for the condition of mankind, and desire, with even a tearful earnestness, to see them in a blessed condition. You sigh and faint for the delights of sanctified and intellectual friendship in which the hearts of companions should open with a noble warmth to the great and noble topics that the universe presents to the mind, instead of gravitating heavily to the petty accidents of animal life. Ah, and you are afflicted with your own incapacities that blur the sight and enfeeble the hands, and drag you into abysses of gloom as dark and dreadful as Jonah's habitation in the storm-tossed sea. Now, there is comfort concerning all this. It is somewhat negative in its form; but, then, it is true, and true comfort wears well, whereas false comfort fails in

the long run. The comfort is that these things are unattainable in the present condition of human life upon earth, but that they are attainable and will be realised in their very perfection in the kingdom of God.

The recognition of this is a help. We reconcile ourselves hopefully to our lot, enduring the hardness of the desert by knowing that it is desert, and in the confident anticipation of the land of promise at the end of the journey. One comfort more. It is not displeasing to the Father that we thus hunger and thirst to the point even of misery, after righteousness. On the contrary, Jesus said, "Blessed are ye that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for ye shall be filled."

Finally, you are troubled and distressed by dissensions in the household of faith. Many of you have been plunged into deep grief, even unto many tears. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial." It is nothing new. It is the modern form of a very ancient and frequent experience, resulting from the fermentation of diverse elements brought together by the knowledge of the truth. We must trust to God's wisdom in permitting of the admixture of these elements. He has done so from the beginning. Do not be too much distressed by it. The results that come of it do not alter things. They only prove and try and manifest things.

The word of the Lord standeth sure amid all the chafes and changes and corruptions of men.

The Lord Jesus, from the serene exaltation of the heavens, has for centuries beheld the confusions and commotions, and wars that have wrought havoc among men in his absence. He has beheld them without surprise. He foresaw them and foretold them. He said there would be strife and division: that iniquity would abound: that the love of many would wax cold: that the trial would be too severe for some, but that he that should endure to the end would be saved. Can we imagine that such things are permitted without a purpose? The apostolic age was rife with them: is it a marvel if we have our share?

There is but one answer on the part of enlightened reason: and that answer will help us to stand in the midst of the evil and hold fast unmoved the hope of the gospel, looking to Christ, who lives — distrusting ourselves, who die. Our life is fleeting away: the battle will soon be over. Be strong and of good comfort. Stand fast: quit you like men. Keep close to the Word in daily reading, and the

peace of God will rule in your hearts and minds and preserve you amid all chafes and tumults, unto His glorious kingdom, which will heal all sores, and chase all darkness for ever away.

Your fellow-sufferer, fellow-soldier, fellow-pilgrim, and fellow-suppliant of the mercy of God unto eternal life.

Robert Roberts.

10th January, 1885.

OUR GOD

*Yahweh is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.
He will not always chide;
Neither will He keep His anger for ever.
He hath not dealt with us after our sins;
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
For as the heaven is high above the earth,
So great is His mercy towards them that fear Him.
As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath He removed our transgressions from us.
Like as a Father pitieth His children,
So Yahweh pitieth them that fear Him.
For He knoweth our frame;
He remembereth that we are dust.*

— Psalm 103:8-14.

If

*If you can keep "the faith" when those about you
Are losing it and seeking something new;
And stand the firmer though they flout you
As being simple and old fashioned too;*

*If you can put your hand in Christ's, and feeling
The marks of Calvary's scars upon your palm,
Can gladly say "Amen" to all his dealing,
Or change the sigh into a joyous psalm.*

*If you can laugh when human hopes are banished,
When castles fall and cherished prospects die;
And just keep on, though earthly props have vanished,
Content to see the pattern by and by.*

*If you can meet abuse without complaining,
And greet your unkind critic with a smile,
If, conscious that your human love is waning,
You claim a Calvary love that knows no guile;*

*If you can bear the unjust imputation
Without reviling or revengeful thought,
And even forfeit rights and reputation,
Because His glory is the one thing sought;*

*If you can give an honest commendation
To him whose work looms larger than your own,
Or scorn to speak the word of condemnation
To him who falls or reaps what he has sown.*

*If you can give consent to Calvary's dying,
To live anew in resurrection power,
And so gain victory, not by personal trying,
But by resting in his triumph every hour;*

*If you can be content with His provision,
Though others seem to prosper and succeed;
Nor let repining mar the heavenly vision,
And simply trust in God for every need.*

*If you can let the mind of Christ possess you,
To think on "things of good report" and true;
And ever let the love of Christ obsess you,
Constraining everything you say and do;*

*If you can find in him your highest treasure,
Let him hold sway over heart and soul and limb,
Then life is yours, and blessing without measure,
And, what is more, you'll live and reign with him.*



"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

**SECOND LETTER
TO THE ELECT
OF GOD
IN A TIME OF TROUBLE**

**THE BENEFITS
OF TROUBLE**

10th February, 1885

TRIUMPHING OVER TROUBLE

Paul wrote: "We glory in tribulations also" (Rom. 5:3). Is this genuinely possible? Only by attaining unto the state of mind manifested by the Apostle. He bore with tribulation because he saw the divine purpose in it. For one thing, he declared, it "worketh patience," or endurance. It is useless fretting against what we cannot alter, and therefore a courageous man will bear with it, and a faithful man will see beyond it. Once a trial has been successfully surmounted it brings "experience" (Rom. 5:4). The Greek word, *dokimen* signifies full proof by trial. The metaphor is taken from the refining of metal, in which there is purification by fire without any deterioration or loss of worth. If in tribulation we seek God's help, and endure the unpleasant experience moment by moment in the realisation that it cannot last for ever, we will ultimately emerge from it with the knowledge that we did not rest on God's help in vain, and that we manifested the strength to endure. This will lead to hope. Hope in what? In the knowledge that He who sustained us in the past will do so in the future even to the setting up of the Kingdom; and in the realisation that as we emerged successfully from one trial so we can from the next, leading to a steady growth of endurance, until the time come when all such experiences will cease. Thus "hope maketh not ashamed," for we shall triumph in spite of trouble, and will respond to the "love of God" that will be revealed in our hearts. Let us then develop the mind of Paul in the face of trouble. Let us view it as a time of testing, in which we can manifest that faith without which "we cannot please God" (Heb. 11:6), and a period of opportunity in which we are able to demonstrate our unswerving loyalty to Him in face of a challenge. When we do this, we truly "fellowship the sufferings of Christ," and will reveal an attitude pleasing unto the Father. However, let us be sure that our tribulations are not the result of our own folly: "For what glory is it if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (1 Peter 2:20).

— H.P.M.

The Benefits of Trouble

Your names are "written in heaven," though no man knows them; and they will be revealed in the day of the opening of the book of God's remembrance, even though you yourselves may have lost them in the forgetfulness of the grave. You are precious to God in life as in death, though to man you may be as the offscouring of all things; and in all your chequered paths, and clouded states, and storm-tossed experiences, the Lord is nigh you (though he seem far distant), with grace, and mercy and peace through him who loved us and laid down his life for us, and who ever liveth to make intercession for us.

DO NOT ALLOW TROUBLE TO OVERWHELM YOU BELOVED,

I have thought to write a second letter to you because of the continued prevalence of trouble. We live in a time of trouble — trouble without, trouble within — trouble in the world at large, trouble at home — trouble in politics, trouble in business — trouble between nations, trouble among the peoples — trouble among those who know not God, and trouble among those who have named the name of Christ in the obedience of the original apostolic gospel recovered in our days from the smothering accumulations of ecclesiastical traditions that had gathered over it.

Be not downcast at the prevalence of trouble. Remember the words of Christ: "Behold, I have told you before." This he said both concerning the troubles that were to mark the close of the Apostolic and Gentile ages: and in general, as concerning the inevitable experience of his friends in the present evil world. And his object in telling it beforehand was that his friends might have consolation in the trouble. He plainly says, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid:" "in me, ye shall have peace:" "in your patience possess ye your souls."

It is true that trouble is trouble however we may take it. At the same time it is robbed of its power to destroy if we recognise that it is inevitable—that it is appointed—and further that it has a purpose to serve. God can give peace or trouble without showing His hand. The ways of

His providence exhibited to us in the Scriptures of truth (and nowhere else) show us this plainly. It is God that is in the troubles that are abroad. He troubles the world because they have corrupted His way in all the earth, and have cast Him behind their backs, and own Him not in any way, although the earth is His and all that it contains. The hour of His judgment is at the door, when there shall be a time of trouble such as never was; and it is His pleasure to prepare for the visible advent of that hour by a gradual harassment of human affairs such as we have seen for years past.

THE RIGHT WAY TO VIEW TROUBLE

He troubles His people that they may be helped to take to heart thoroughly what they know concerning the vanity of all present things and the enduring nature alone of the things related to His purpose in Christ. We are so prone to cling to present things: we are so liable to forget the wide-sweeping and eternal reality of His mighty ways that we need a little help. There is nothing helps like trouble. This is the testimony of universal experience. Even the Psalmist says, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now I have kept thy word."

Trouble need not, and will not, and can not, cease to be trouble: for then it would miss its effect. But there are different ways of taking it, and it is to suggest the right way of taking it that I, your fellow-sufferer, write these things. It can be taken with no resignation and no comfort. It needs not to be said that this is not the right way. This is a way that leads only to evil. I have seen many walk in this way. They are not sufficiently enlightened to know that trouble can have a mission. You are to them as one that mocks if you suggest that a purpose is in it. They cannot see such a thing and they have no faith in it, and they refuse to be resigned or comforted. They feel only as a creature feels that is whipped. They smart under the pain and whine.

The danger of such a state of mind lies in the steps to which it will incline the person who is the subject of it. Never having in reality accepted the divine teaching that "whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth," he fails to be reasonably exercised by the chastening when it comes, and in the words of Christ, "is offended," or stumbles, and driven by it to be discouraged in all divine directions. He loses his interest in the truth: he ceases to find any pleasure in the duties associated with it: he returns to ways he had abandoned, and seeks to soothe the asperities of his sin-

stricken state of existence in the exercises, occupations and pursuits of the old man, in pleasure, business or worldly association. Paul had to write of such a one at last "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved the present world."

The right way is known to you all; for my words are to those whom the Lamb shall at last lead to living fountains of waters, and wipe away all tears from their eyes. Those are "obedient children," who have learnt the spirit's wisdom at the mouth of the Apostles, when they say "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God:" "faint not when thou art rebuked of Him," "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing had happened unto you," "for hereunto were ye called:" "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing."

The right way is not to kick at trouble, or resent it, or be discouraged by it, but to take it patiently — to look at it, and into it, so as to divine the meaning of it, and mix comfort with it. God is "a very present help in trouble" to all, who like David, "set God always before their face."

Paul calls Him "the God of all comfort," and adds "He comforteth us in all our tribulations that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we, ourselves, are comforted of God." This comfort we get by the exercise of our minds. God tells us not to be "like the horse or the mule which have no understanding." Trouble (Paul says) "yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby." Hence, we must reason, or exercise our minds upon, all our troubles, in order to get the comfort. By this, we do get it.

THE INEVITABILITY OF TROUBLE

We say to ourselves, first of all, "it has pleased God to appoint that we must, through much tribulation, enter the kingdom of God." The form of this tribulation is not uniform. It is not the same in any two contemporary cases, and it has not been the same in any two centuries. But, in one form or other, tribulation has been the lot of all God's children ever since He began to call men to His kingdom and glory.

In the first century, it was often rough usage at the hands of the people or the authorities: the loss of property, of liberty, sometimes, of life. In our day, it cannot be these, at least, not in the open direct manner of the early centuries.

We live in a day when the purpose of God required, and has brought about, liberty of conscience as the law of the public life, and when, consequently, we can profess and serve the truth without molestation, and, in many cases, without disadvantage.

Having lost this mode of partaking of the sufferings of Christ, shall we, therefore, be without tribulation? What does Paul say — that “if we are without chastisement, whereof all (the children) are partakers, then we are bastards, and not sons.” The absence of persecution will predispose every true believer to expect trouble in some other form — not only to expect it, but, in a sense, to desire it, and, in a sense, to rejoice in it when it comes; for it has a work to work in every true saint. On this ground Paul said, “And not only (do we rejoice in hope of the glory of God), but we glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, etc.”

The work to be accomplished by trouble is a delicate mental result, not at all appreciable to the natural thinker, however deep or polished, but of great value to the individual and very precious in the sight of God — “in the sight of God of great price, a meek and quiet spirit.” It is to produce this result that He in love corrects and afflicts His children, “not willingly” so far as their pain is concerned, but quite willingly so far as the effect is concerned. “He chastens us . . . *for our profit*, **THAT WE MAY BE PARTAKERS OF HIS HOLINESS**” (Heb. 12:10). If we consider what this holiness means, and how trouble acts in its development, we will be “comforted in all our tribulations that we endure.”

How natural it is for us to stagnate in spiritual things. How inevitably the mind of man, when let alone, seems to settle into self-consciousness and self-service only, and to become insensible to the existence and purposes and claims of God: how indisposed to self-sacrifice; how liable to live for this life; how unfitted to live as men called to the fellowship of God and of Christ; how incapable of seeing and feeling that we are nothing but shadows fleeting across the surface of the troubled waters, and that God only is the eternal enduring reality, working all things after the counsel of His own will, and requiring of us a constant hearty worship, and a steady unflinching obedience to all His beautiful commandments.

WHAT TROUBLE IS DESIGNED TO PRODUCE

Now, what is it that wakes up the heart from this spiritual lethargy? What makes men in earnest about life, in love with God and Christ, in sympathy with the Father's glorious plan revealed in the covenants? Is it worldly prosperity? Is it "good company"? Is it honour among men? Is it indulgence in pleasure? Is it the reading of novels? Is it steeping the senses in strong drink or the fumes of the narcotic weed? Is it even Scripture polemics such as some people love to indulge in, or the endless, resultless, investigating word-strife, which men are prone to dignify by high-sounding descriptions, but which are far more accurately defined in Paul's well-known pithy words, wherein he alleges of certain things that they are "of no profit," but "subverting" to "the hearers?" — No: there is but one answer to all these questions. Godliness is not found in the state of mind fostered by any or all of these influences. Godliness come from trouble where the knowledge of God exists for the trouble to act on. There is nothing like trouble for clearing the spiritual eye. There is nothing like trouble for weakening all carnal affinities, and leading the mind to seek God, and to rest on His Word, and to build on His promises. — Nothing like trouble for helping us to see the emptiness of this life at its best, and the enduring reality and glory of that which is to come.

Beloved of God, you must often have experienced the truth of this. Is it not, then, a great comfort, in the midst of the trouble to know that it is for good, and not for evil, that trouble is sent. The trouble of the present hour is great. The world's sky is all overhung with heavy clouds that refuse to disperse; and the ecclesial sky is of a corresponding sombreness. Who shall say the trouble was not needed? The Lord is at the door, and many have taken upon them the profession of His name, and a place among those who wait for him from heaven, without an apostolic appreciation of the position.

WHY THE ECCLESIAS ARE TROUBLED

What has been the state of the community for time past? Has not a film been creeping over the spiritual eyesight? Has not mere sociability been taking the place of earnest fellowship? Has not a secularising tendency been slowly asserting itself and getting the upper hand of the new man in the ecclesias? Have not some begun to tire of Bible reading? Has there not been a going back to the false tastes and false standards of the merely intellectual world

from which we had been emancipated? Has not style been taking the place of truth, and literary taste supplanting the robust spiritual appetite that finds edification in stern facts rather than pleasing fancies? Has there not been more punctiliousness about the modes of doing the work than earnest concern to see that it is done, and thankful joy at its accomplishment by whatever means?

These things cannot be gainsaid where there is any spiritual power to discern the situation. Therefore God has permitted a great trial to come upon us. But, beloved, be of good cheer. It is not for destruction: it is for edification. God would have his people ready to receive His Son. When the cloud and the trouble have passed, every true son and daughter will find themselves more prepared as the result of it, hearts more humble; love more strong; minds more clear; purpose more earnest; spirit more holy; determination more resolute; to count all things as nothing, that we may win Christ by a more devoted service to his name, forgetting the things that are behind and pressing forward to those things that lie ahead.

What great comfort God has given us in the events that are causing the ears of all men to tingle.* England had Egypt put upon her hands nearly three years ago. Ever since then she has been striving in vain to release herself from the complication. First one thing, then another, has stopped her backing-out movements. Meanwhile, the European despotisms (commanding among them millions of armed men, and desiring a pretext to divide Turkey among them), have been urging England to accept the Egyptian position, and annex the country. "No," England persisted in

* Brother Roberts here makes reference to the signs of the times then current. Britain had unwillingly occupied Egypt in 1882, and ever since tried to withdraw. General Gordon had been given the task of consolidating the control of the Egyptian Government with the aid of British troops, but was assassinated at Khartoum, with the result that the Liberal Government under Gladstone was compelled to order the military occupation of Egypt which subsequently took place. This fulfilled the anticipations of Brother Thomas in *Elpis Israel* who wrote in 1848:

"God, who rules the world, and marks out the bounds of habitations for the nations, will make Britain a gainer by the transaction. He will bring her rulers to see the desirableness of Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba, which they will be induced, by the force of circumstances, probably, to take possession of. They will, however, before the battle of Armageddon, be compelled to retreat from Egypt and Ethiopia. . ." (p. 445).

If world events in the Middle East should have been a cause of comfort in the days of Brother Roberts, how much more today!

saying: "Give me my Gordon, and I will go and leave Egypt to the Egyptians." And she was trying to get her Gordon, and had just laid her hand on him, when, lo, God snatches him from her grasp by the hand of a barbarian imposter; and insults her honour in the eyes of the world by repelling her messengers from Khartoum, and compelling them to flee down the Nile ignominiously before a storm of shells and bullets. And now the British nation is roused to a desperateness of resolve that Mr. Gladstone is powerless to restrain. At whatever cost of men or money, Britain determines on a new and supreme effort to break the power of the Mahdi — an effort that all men see commits her to the course desired by the European Powers, and ties her hands in such a way as to liberate them to do their will in the solution of the Eastern Question.

A SOURCE OF COMFORT IN TROUBLE

What is it that leads us to regard as comforting, a situation like this, which fills the world with fear and trembling? You know the answer. God has made known, for the comfort of His servants, during the prevalence of darkness upon the earth, what should come to pass among men, in so far as it bears upon His purpose. He has done this "at sundry times and in divers manners." The most notable "time" was A.D. 96, or thereabouts, and when, in the most striking "manner," a symbolic vision was shown to John in Patmos, for communication to the brethren of Christ, "that they might know the things that were shortly to come to pass," and know the blessedness of "hearing the words of this prophecy" in the discernment it would impart to them of the hand of God in the affairs of the nations of the earth.

By means of this vision. Light has been shed on all the dark chaos that has filled up the interval since Christ's departure from the summit of the Mount of Olives. The light has not been discerned by many. Divine light never has been seen by the multitude. God's own appointment is that "none of the wicked shall understand," and the earth is filled with the wicked—as divinely estimated. But it has been discerned, more or less clearly, by a few, in all the intervening ages, since it was given.

In our own age, it has been caused to shine out with even piercing brightness. In Dr. Thomas, God gave us a man by whom the vision has become plain and luminous. By his aid, we have been able to *see*, with this result that, without his further aid, we can read the Apocalypse with unspeakable comfort and light. That is, the light we have

received, is not artificial light. It does not depend upon Dr. Thomas's dictum, or Dr. Thomas's ingenuity, as in the case of empirical theories and systems that men have broached. It is light that belongs to the subject itself, and which we can see and apply for ourselves long after he has gone to his grave; and without any further reading of his wonderful *Eureka*, though that is always a luxury.

By the light of this priceless vision which "God gave unto Jesus Christ . . . that his servants might know," we are able to look back upon the panorama of European history, and identify the various prophetic scenes shown to John in Patmos. We are able to trace the progress down to our own day, and to discern where we ourselves stand in the divine programme in the midst of the turmoils of our own troubled day.

The result has been to enable us to anticipate the occurrence of a number of things that have really happened, and in the order in which they have transpired; and the further result is to give us assurance of the nearness of the coming of the Lord. Nothing plants this assurance so firmly in the heart as a general grasp of the Apocalyptic visions. The assurance so derived is independent of chronological considerations and calculations of the character recently discussed under the enquiry, "Why the delay?"* These considerations strengthen it, but they are not vital to it with the Apocalypse in hand. Here the whole matter is pictorially exhibited in panoramic sequence by which we can see where we are without reference to chronological problems. Historically speaking, we have seen the whole picture pass before our eyes up to a certain point, and that point is the present time, and the thing that ought to be happening at the present time is happening.

The Apocalypse itself may be likened to a programme which God has put into our hands; and the European habitable to a stage or platform on which certain things are to be shown having reference to His purpose on earth. The programme has been faithfully carried out for 1,800 years, and we now see what ought to be on the stage at the present moment according to the programme. We see an exhausted Turkish empire at the collapsing point, and militant nations having been brought into their present armed state and temper through the operations of the Franco-frog diplomacy

* A series of articles which appeared in *The Christadelphian* in which the time-periods of prophecy were discussed in the light of Christ's continued absence.

on the three leading centres of the Roman-European system as foreshown in chapter 16:12-14. We see the way preparing for the coming new order of kings whose land has been desolated by the Euphratean Ottoman. This has been the situation for years past, and now we see in Egypt one of those sharp wrenches of Providence that have power to lead a prepared situation into new developments.

A new turning point has, in fact, been reached, at which there is scarcely anything we may not shortly see in the way of the completion of the political programme on which our eyes have been fixed with earnest solicitude for over thirty years past. If the Turkish empire disappear, which is now almost the daily expectation of politicians, the Holy Land will be liberated from the only obstacle that restrains the full development of impending Jewish restoration under English protection;* and there is nothing then between us and the precious parenthesis of verse 15, "Behold I come as a thief" — followed by the convulsions of the seventh vial, when "a great voice out of the temple of heaven from the throne," proclaims "it is done" and lets loose "voices and thunders and lightnings," and "a great earthquake such as was not since there were men upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great" — commotions which end in the subversion of the existing order of things upon the earth and the setting up of the kingdom of God.

It is not possible to have greater comfort than this prospect affords: and it is not possible to have greater kindness shown to us from God than any outbreak of trouble that has the effect of waking up our dormant minds, and emancipating us from the bondage into which the present in its endless varieties of natural affinity, is so liable to bring us. Such an outbreak is far from agreeable, and in some senses far from profitable; but God, who knows our dis-temper, knows the remedy, and crowns His wisdom with His kindness in applying it in His own time and in His own way.

Ever praying you may be all supported in all the trials you may be called upon to endure, and may come forth from them all, more than conquerors, in the presence of the glorious Lord Jesus in the hastening day of his appearing. I write myself once more, with the true love that belongs only to the bonds of true fellowship in Christ.

Your companion in tribulation and patience and hope.

10th February, 1885.

Robert Roberts.

* These anticipations have had wonderful vindication since the death of Brother Roberts.

COURAGE BROTHER

*Courage Brother, do not stumble
Though thy path be dark as night;
There's a star to guide the humble
Trust in God, and do the right.*

*Let the road be rough and dreary,
And its end far out of sight,
Foot it bravely, strong or weary,
Trust in God, and do the right.*

*Perish policy and cunning,
Perish all that fears the light;
Whether winning, whether losing,
Trust in God, and do the right.*

*Trust no party, sect or faction,
Trust no leaders in the fight;
But in every word and action,
Trust in God, and do the right.*

*Trust no lovely forms of passion,
Foes may look like angels bright;
Trust no custom, school or fashion,
Trust in God, and do the right.*

*Simple rule and safest guiding,
Inward peace and inward might;
Star upon our path abiding,
Trust in God, and do the right.*

*Some will hate thee, some will love thee,
Some will flatter, some will slight;
Cease from man, and look above thee,
Trust in God, and do the right.*

**THIRD LETTER
TO THE ELECT
OF GOD
IN A TIME OF TROUBLE**

**THE LIMITATIONS
OF TROUBLE**

March, 1885

THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

In pursuing our duties in the Truth, we must be actuated by a higher motive than that of present success. Whether men will hear or forbear, through evil report or good report, we must steadily and cheerfully go on. God more frequently than not permits our labours to be fruitless. "How few receive with cordial faith the tidings which we bring." We think of the labour and expense in our big and little efforts, and the infinitesimal results. Our failures, too, are not confined to the alien. How often is the faithful word of warning, of counsel, of reproof, treated with heartless contempt by professors in the household? Yes, there is now but little success; failure is the rule. Yet so far as the obedient are concerned, it is not really failure, for by means of it inconceivable good is being evolved. This will be apparent when the day arrives for the manifestation of the sons of God. Even the offence given, the misunderstanding created, the enmity and bitterness evoked, aid in developing the sufferings which teach obedience and bring perfection. Christ's service calls for the exhibition of patience and long-suffering. These virtues can only be cultivated by turning a deaf ear to the likes and dislikes of man and performing our duties as unto Christ, who is at the head of affairs, manipulating them as His wisdom sees fit. In our trials, let us think of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and all the prophets, who through their patient endurance have earned the praise of God (James 5:10). Let us pray with Paul that we may be "strengthened with all might, according to His (God's) glorious power unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness" (Col. 1:11).

A.T.J.

The Limitations of Trouble

Again, greeting in the Lord. You will not always be in trouble: It will last only so long as may be necessary for the accomplishment of God's purpose in sending it. "Weeping may endure for a night: but joy cometh in the morning." Weeping means sorrow of heart. "Ye now therefore have sorrow," but "blessed are ye that weep now — ye shall be comforted." In this, be sustained in the assurance of grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE ELECT DEFINED

BELOVED —

When I wrote the first letter, I had no thought of writing a second, and when I wrote the second, still less did I think of writing a third. But the writing of one seemed to leave echoes ringing through the mental chamber that would not cease till they found expression. I have thought you might not unfavourably receive a third, in view of the way some have spoken of the first and second. And it is a relief to my own mind thus to speak in the abstract to those whom, for the moment, I think of only as the spotless elect of God, passing agonisingly through the tribulation which is preparing them for joyful entrance into the kingdom of God.

We live in a state of things so evil upon the earth that the very term "elect" has become a test. The word dies on the lips of most of those who try to pronounce it seriously. It is associated in modern flippancy with Mormon imposture, sour-faced, tipping Scotch Calvinism, and moral imbecilities and hideousnesses of all sorts. It belongs in refined estimation to the cant of hypocrisy, the twaddle of benighted sectarianism, or the shallow conceited evangelical mediocrity, pining and dying of moral diabetes. But it represents a noble reality for all that.

The elect have not ceased out of the universe because their name is no longer pronounced upon earth by the pure lips of the Son of God. They may have become as few as the eight souls among the population that were pitilessly drowned in Noah's 600th year by the flood; and they may

be regarded with a contempt as unfeigned as that with which Noah's expectations and workmanship on the ark were undoubtedly looked upon by the stalwart men and fair women to whom he was vainly a preacher of righteousness. But the noble family whom the term "the elect" defines, are nevertheless a reality in the history of the past, and a not entirely extinct fact in the present, when there is a providential needs-be for their existence contemporaneously with the sixth vial, under which they are the blessed "watchers" for whom awaits the honour of escape from the common lot of man: (for "we shall not all sleep").

They are styled the elect because, prospectively, they are the chosen of God: and they are chosen because of their faith and obedience: and are faithful and obedient, because they have become enlightened in the word of revelation: and they have become enlightened in this, because God has sent it forth as His power to save, and endowed them with the capacity to receive it and bring forth fruit unto His glory and their own salvation.

To them, you belong, by the working out of this line of things: and for this cause I write, that we may be comforted, in times of evil, by "the mutual faith, both of you and me."

CONDITIONS WHICH THE ELECT EXPERIENCE

It is pleasant in every sense to speak in the free and unconstrained way a letter allows — to speak, that is, of those things which are hidden below the current of ordinary life, but which more deeply affect us than those things in which we appear as other men. It is not always possible to unbare the inner man. Yet, the inner man is the real man, and asserts himself in the outer life, sooner or later, with all men, for evil or good.

If the inner man is the new man, he may appear to be dormant a long time, because of the checking effect of surroundings. The deportment of the world in which we live acts on him as the chill breath of winter on a delicate plant or creature that seeks warmth. In its presence, he is liable to go into his shell and remain there. It is pleasant for him to come out and breathe the balmy air that comes with apostolic saintship, whether actual or contemplated. In the present case it is a little of both. I write to you, knowing some of you, whose remembrance is a comfort, and grateful as the incense of the sanctuary. I write to the rest knowing them not in person, but thinking of them only as the elect of God: and, therefore, as men and women, earnestly striving to consecrate themselves in their several

spheres of life, to God, through His Son, in the way He has appointed, in the ardent love of His name, and in the joyful hope of His promised goodness, counting all things upon earth as dross, that they may win Christ.

To such, my letter, though necessarily public in its mode of transmission, is a confidential letter of friendship in Christ.

To the carnally-minded, whose natures have never yielded to the transfusing glow of the Spirit (radiant from the page of complete inspiration): and who survey all phenomena with the dull eye of their unspiritual discernment, and estimate all things by the rule of their heavy-footed present-world affinities, my letter will appear an impertinence and a presumption. With the best of good wishes, I must leave them to their unhappy fermentations. Doubtless they have a mission. "The deceived and the deceiver are His." They serve a purpose in the divine working out of things.

The gibes of the unthinking: the ineffable scorn of the proud: the unmixed hate of the evil man are not without a place in the development of the saints of God. The prophets were subject to this kind of experience. Upon the devoted head of Jesus, the utmost force of Satanism was spent. The apostles (filling up the measure of his suffering), had to drink of the same cup, as he said. Therefore, as an element of divine discipline, they are to be patiently endured, without "railing accusation," which even "the angels, greater in power and might, bring not against them before the Lord." But while enduring them, it is lawful to get away from them, "letting them alone," as Jesus said; going apart, even "into the desert to rest a while."

My letter is to you who live in God: whose faith is a reality: whose affections are set on things above, and not on things on the earth: who are nothing in their own eyes: to whom the circumstances of their daily life are but the form of their probation; the mode of their development; the soil and manure in which they are being grown for divine use.

To you, mortal life is a pilgrimage in reality — not a cant sentiment: a journey in which you are consciously, overtly, and with many deliberate and practical adaptations of means to ends, passing on to a goal which is your objective. Your mortal affairs are but the vesture of your real, inner growing-up-to-God self. It is a luxury to commune with such — a luxury unspeakable.

The majority of men are not such. The majority of

men are strangers to God and to wisdom—lovers of pleasure only, as animals are, whose sensation supply the boundary line of their mental action. Intercourse with the majority of men is consequently a painful accommodation of magnanimity.

HOW TROUBLE MOULDS CHARACTER

But I must not take up all my letter in writing about my letter, I must write it.

I thought I would speak to you of your own needs and troubles. Of some of them, I have already spoken. They are real and important to you, though they may seem small in the open bustle of life. You find no one to tell them to — no one to be interested in them for you. "All seek their own:" Paul found this to be the case and said it; and things are still as he described them. But though the world is unsympathetic and indifferent, it is not so in the true household of faith. The children of God are interested in one another's troubles as well as joys. By-and-by there will be nothing but the joys to be interested in — and such joys as we have not known yet.

But we are not there yet. We are getting towards there, every day a step; but as yet, it is the trouble that is with us — trouble, the full depth and bitterness of which can only be known to each individual heart. It is all known to God. In this there is consolation, and it is a relief of mind to pour out our complaint before Him. The very act brings succour; but we may rely upon a more active help than this. Though God in His wisdom, does not permit us at this stage of His purpose on earth, to have the open responses to prayer that David and other servants had in the days of old, still there is a response — veiled and indirect, but still a response in the granting of our requests. The teaching of Christ and of the apostles justify us in this belief. Yea, actual experience oftentimes enable us to say concerning the saints even now: "They cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses;" but not until the object of the trouble is secured.

Have you ever realised all that is involved in Paul's saying, that "tribulation worketh patience?" It is a while before we see it all. Probably we shall never quite see it all till we are able to look back upon it and contemplate results from the standpoint of glory gained. But we may get a glimpse that will help endurance.

Here is what strikes reflective observation. Man is a

wondrous machine of life which most men are liable to think God could have produced in a state of perfection at the start. It is vain to speculate on what God could have done. It is what He has done that is practical

What He has done as regards ourselves is this: He has so made us that we cannot be developed into full-working vito-mentality without experience. A well-balanced mentality is the most beautiful thing in creation, but it is not produced on mechanical principles. It depends upon the action of the voluntary will, which is not chemically or mechanically controlled but by the power of idea formed as the result of experience within the subjective area of its action. There are mechanical principles at the bottom of the operation (such as bone, blood, flesh, electricity, etc.) but these only supply the foundation upon which the perfect result is to be built.

This perfect result requires the play of experience (using the word in its most comprehensive sense, as including knowledge of all kinds, whether derived from sensation, perception or information). Without experience, the mind is like a machine composed of many moving parts without unity of action or central control. Its various parts and forces want to go working and whirring on their own individual accounts which brings destruction.

They require to be brought into unity, and a rightly balanced action one with another.

This cannot be done without experience, and it will be found that an indispensable part of this experience is trouble. This may excite surprise at first: but nothing excites surprise that is at last found to be true. And this will be found true. The finest characters have been ripened by trouble.

Looking back, think of Joseph, Moses, David and many others whose acquaintance we make in divinely-recorded history. Looking round among our acquaintances, if there is a man of any value as a friend and counsellor, he has come through trouble. The lap of luxury is notoriously unfavourable to the development of character. The man who has not seen trouble is necessarily more or less green. He lacks the sympathy and mental breadth that come with trouble.

How easy, therefore, in view of these almost self-evident facts, it becomes to submit to the dispensation of trouble through which it pleases God to bring His children in preparation for the exaltation of His kingdom. "Tribulation worketh patience," You can see and say, "it is a fact,"

Are you not therefore helped to accept the tribulation? A character without patience is a character without use to God or man. Patience that is not colorless is precious.

This is the patience that comes with impulse subdued and penetration tempered by tribulation.

It is the patience that God is working in you by all the tribulations that you endure. In this sense you can join with Paul when he said, "We glory in tribulation also." You can glory in it as an experience which, though painful for the time being, is working out for you unspeakable sweetness in the day of the perfected work.

HOW TO BEAR WITH TROUBLE

Therefore, beloved, bear up under it. Do not be destroyed by it. It is only for a season, and that a short one. A few years more at the worst, and it will all be over, and God's work in you accomplished for the endless ages. Death is but a moment, however long we may rest under its shadow. We shall seem to emerge instantaneously from the gloom of mortal life to the sunshine of the cloudless morn immortal.* It has been thus with all the children of God. They have fallen asleep in their several generations, after their appointed taste of the tribulation, saying with Jacob, "Few and evil have been the days of the years of the life of my pilgrimage": and they will all seem to enter at once into the consolation that waits them at the appearing of Christ. The arrangement is so beautiful that while they will seem to reach the glory each at the end of his own tribulation, all will find themselves entering that glory "together." Thus Abraham will appear to himself to have been no longer in the grave than the brother buried the day before Christ's arrival. He will find himself transferred, as by the wave of a magic wand, from the solitariness of his old age, to the presence of his promised seed, "as the stars of the sky for multitude."

Allow these things to help you in the dreary course you have meanwhile to sustain. Be assured that your steps are ordered of the Lord, and that it is no accident that has placed you where you are, and subjected you to just the particular grievances that afflict you. You will be liable to think that some other position would be better for you than

* Brother Roberts is referring to the instantaneous change to immortality that will follow the appearance of the accepted before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

the one you occupy. Don't be dismayed at this feeling. It is natural: it is inevitable. You feel the trouble of the position you are in: you cannot feel the trouble of the position you are not in. Consequently, the position you are not in will always seem more desirable than the one you are in. You think of that other position with a feeling of relief, because your blank view of it is a contrast to the actual position you are in.

Use your reason and exercise faith, and you will be resigned.

Reason will tell you that other people will regard your position precisely as you regard theirs, and for the same reason: they do not know your trouble, but only their own, and consequently they feel as if they would be free from trouble if they were only placed as you are. It is an illusion of the mind.

It is like two men on a cold day — one walking on the road, and the other riding on the top of a conveyance. The man on the conveyance is cold and stiff, and thinks how much better off is the man on the road, having exercise; the man on the road is tired, and perhaps over-heated with a long trudge, and thinks how blissful it must be on the top of the vehicle.

There is no exemption from trouble among those who are "the called" according to the purpose of God. The part of wisdom among them all is — not to look enviously upon a neighbour's position, but sympathetically and helpfully, in the full assurance that our brother has trouble that we know not of, and stands in need of what poor comfort a brother's sympathy can afford him. And each man, concerning his own position will say "It is the one appointed: it is the one needed: I will resign myself to it: I will grapple with its difficulties, and bear its burdens, and endure its temptations — in all things and at all times, casting my care upon God, invoking His help in all my feeble efforts to faithfully fulfil the part assigned me in this present mortal scheme."

PROBLEMS OF ISOLATION AND OF ECCLESIAL LIFE

Many of you are lonely: and you think how advantageous and gratifying it would be to be associated with a large ecclesia. If you were within reach of such a body, it would be your duty to associate with them, and take part with them in the work Christ has given to all his servants

who have eyes and ears. And doubtless there are advantages in this association. But there is another side from which you may take comfort. In isolation you have an unobstructed vision of the things of the spirit. Your daily readings go home with greater power. Your connection with the truth is more direct and sweet than perhaps it would be if you were in the midst of a large body of professors.

When you are in the midst of such a body, persons and things and questions and agitations of a purely ephemeral character are liable to come between you and the great things of God. It is natural it should be so in the present position of the testimony of God in an evil world.

If an ecclesia were wholly composed of men and women in subjection to the mind of the Spirit, it would be different: connection in that case would be an unmixed good. But the state of an ecclesia never has been such — not even in the days of the Apostles. There is always a large admixture of the mere secular element, who accept the truth as a theory, but with whom it has no prevailing power in the affections and life. Consequently there is a constant liability to the stirring of influences unfavourable to a godly life in Christ: questions and agitations and strifes, having their origin in personal ambitions and petty interests, which distress and hinder the new man in Christ Jesus. From all these you are safe in the isolation in which the truth has found you; and are able in peace to enrich your minds from the inexhaustible storehouse of the Spirit's teaching.

If God, in His wisdom, change your lot, and end your tranquility by exposing you to the invigorating discipline of ecclesial life, accept the change with resignation, in the resolve, however occupied, to glorify God in your day and generation; but you need not long for it: you have more comfort and joy as you are.*

* As one who has experienced the loneliness of isolation as well as the problems of Ecclesial life, I respectfully disagree with Brother Roberts in this conclusion. Despite the stress and strain of Ecclesial difficulties when things go wrong, there is a joy and satisfaction in communal worship that is lacking in the loneliness of isolation. The companionship of "those of like precious faith" is among the most beautiful experiences of our present pilgrimage, and it is often manifested in its warmest degree in times of Ecclesial controversy. Moreover, those in isolation are not exempt from the troubles and heart-breaks of the latter, but must bear it on their own, without the consolation that comes from companionship. The Proverbs declares: "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth

Some other things occur to me: but my letter is already long enough. I may resume another time. Meanwhile, in the afflictions and comforts of the gospel, I subscribe myself — Your fellow-suffering brother and partaker of hope,

Robert Roberts.

March, 1885.

the countenance of his friend" (Prov. 27:17); again: "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24). Trial reveals the value of true friendship, and manifests whether its protestations of loyalty are genuine or not. Whatever the circumstances of life, let us count our blessings, and recognise that they are far greater than those possessed by the world with all its frivolity. The Lord Jesus promised that they would be so. He declared that we would receive "now in this time" an hundred-fold more in compensation than that which we forsake for his cause, though "with persecutions" (Mark 10:30; Matt. 19:27-30), whilst also living in hope of life eternal. For all our troubles and distresses, there is far more happiness and satisfaction in the sphere of the Truth than there is outside of it.

IF

*If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowances for their doubting you;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:*

*If you can dream — and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build them up with worn-out tools;*

*If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings — nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a man, my son!*

R.K. — Amended from Golden Treasury.

**FOURTH LETTER
TO THE ELECT
OF GOD
IN A TIME OF TROUBLE**

**THE
CONSOLATIONS
OF TROUBLE**

April, 1885

THE LIFE TO COME

It is impossible to conceive the greatness of the reward promised. The terms "eternal life," "the life to come," etc., which express it are familiar enough, but their very familiarity tends to lessen our realisation of the blessings they imply. No joys that we have ever experienced will compare with those which everlasting life will bring. Perhaps the most vivid conception that we can get is by contrasting what is with what is to be. We have all felt the ills of mortality — sleepless nights, flagging energies, headaches and heart-aches. Most of us, too, have suffered from the curse of death — the loss of husband or wife, or father or mother, or a cherished child or friend. We know also from personal experience the incessant turmoil of present existence — the struggle with the diabolos, both within and without. Immortality, thanks to God, will mean an end of all this — the unloosing of every burden. The attainment of the reward promised will mean the greatest happiness ever enjoyed (absence of mental and physical pain, life really pleasureable) with a nature capable of reflecting and receiving every divine virtue and good. Then, as a brother once said: "Every thought will be a joy; every moment a pleasure; every breath an inspiration of an ecstasy that will only find expression in praise to Him that sits upon the throne." The bestowal of immortal life will make us part of a company, glorious, mighty, God-like, which will not only be free itself, but able to free others also, from the dreadful ills which now make all creation groan. Who will say that the divine promise is not exceeding great? Shall we not eagerly look and earnestly pray for its manifestation? Is there not something very wrong if we do not? Let us see in "the joy set before us" the consolation of trouble that we might experience now.

The Consolations of Trouble

For the last time at present, I greet you in the name of the Lord, wishing you all the comfort and fortitude and joy which Christ intended his disciples to receive from his loving and sympathising words at the table before he left them; and which they would always impart to us, if our minds were capable of continuous and lively remembrance.

THE REALITY OF DIVINE LOVE

KNOWN AND LOVED OF GOD, AND DEARLY BE-LOVED BY CHRIST,

It is one of the many evils of our present situation that the endearments of the truth seem empty phrases. As it is with the name of God's family — the elect — so it is with the love that belongs to them; it is talked of only to seem a mockery or a thing that strong men are ashamed of. But it is none the less a precious reality. It may seem as absent and dead as the flowers of summer in the depth of winter, but it exists as actually as the roots and seeds under the snow, and will come forth in beauty and fragrance in due season.

Paul speaks of "the comfort of love." Love is comforting. We all feel the comfort of it, whether we are the subject or the object of it. It is the most beneficent mental activity in the universe. It blesses giver and receiver alike. It is the highest phase of the Eternal Power, from which all things have sprung: God is love. He is truly many things besides: but love inspires and directs them all.

You do not experience much of love upon earth at present.* You are, in fact, languishing for want of it. A mother's love sweetened the early years of your life: the love of companions and friends continued the sweetness for a time: but as life rolled on and experience of human

* That is, outside the Body of Christ. Even inside the Brotherhood, love is sometimes lacking, and we feel a desire for the warm assurance of understanding affection based on the common acceptance of the Truth, and a mutual co-operation in its activities and ideals. When this is lacking, we can always turn to the Father through prayer and bask in the warmth of His love, recognising that "God is love," and if He be for us, who can successfully oppose us.

weakness increased in yourselves and others, the sweetness had gradually disappeared with the inrush of the bitter waters of a more accurate knowledge of all human things.

And now you find yourselves in a desert in the midst of many people, you are alone, and where love is mainly a thing of memory or of painful desire. And you groan within yourselves and pine for love, both to receive and bestow.

Now, there is an antidote to the unutterable sadness of this position, if we can but open the mind to its application. It lies in the fact that the elect, in the midst of their afflictions, are "known and loved of God and dearly beloved by Christ." You have only to believe the fact to feel the comfort of it. You cannot feel it by looking into your own heart. The fact does not lie in your feelings, but quite outside of them, just as any friend's love is a fact outside of your own feelings. To feel the comfort of your friend's love, you look at its indications — his acts, his words, his looks. These inspire you with the confidence of his love, and the confidence brings comfort. If you trusted to your own sensations apart from the tokens of love, you could not feel either the confidence or the comfort.

It is much more so with the love of God. If you trust to your feelings, you will never know it, for there is no point of contact between human feeling and divine thoughts. God's thoughts are outside of us, and as much higher than our thoughts as heaven is higher than the earth, as God says (Isa. 55:12).

What you must do is to look at its tokens. These are of a somewhat different order from the tokens of human love, yet it will be found upon reflection that they are not less tangible or convincing. There are words and acts (historically reflected) there are looks. The difference is that they are not personal to ourselves. Doubtless, this is a great difference as regards our ability to appropriate the comfort; still it does not affect the essence of the thing: the tokens have only to be looked at steadily to bring the conviction that will produce the comfort.



TOKENS OF DIVINE LOVE

What are the tokens? (Tokens, that is, of the feeling existing in God's mind, irrespective of our ability to be conscious of it) — I might speak of creation as it is — its beauty, its wisdom, its manifest beneficence: but you might feel as if this did not come close enough. Creation you

might feel to be too vast and indiscriminating to give an assurance upon which you could individually rest. This would be a natural feeling — to some extent, a reasonable feeling. Still, it may be carried too far: you must allow it is something to see divine wisdom and love manifest in creation, as we see it with our eyes.

It is something to see the Father's impress in the physical universe, marred and obscured though it may be by the particular disturbance prevailing at present in the affairs of men. Doubtless, it is more to the purpose to note the fact of His having spoken and acted. This fact comes to us with Israel's history, and the history of Europe as affected by the apostolic work. Moses and the prophets come before us in the other. The Bible is the irremovable and inexpugnable monument of both. In the reading of it, we are in the warm presence of living reality. We hear God's voice: we see His wonderful acts: we almost note His looks in Christ: and out of all comes the conviction of the Father's love — not as a fantasy, not as a sentiment, but as a deduction, as scientifically accurate in its process and result as any modern demonstration.

What more explicit assurance could we have than we have received?

First Moses tells us: "The Lord thy God is a merciful God. . . The Lord is long suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression." Then from David we have the teeming declarations with which the Psalms abound, "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion: slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him: in those that hope in his mercy."

Then the prophets, one and all, as occasion serves, unite in telling us what Isaiah declares: "God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Yahweh is my strength and song: he also is become my salvation . . thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee."

In the apostolic writings (including in them the apostolic record of Christ's sayings) God's love may be said to glow with a warming brightness that we cannot escape. First, Jesus tells us in general that God has "loved the world," and sent him for the reason that a way might be opened for His love to operate conformably with His righteousness. Then particularly, he used such comforting words to the dis-

ciples as these: "The Father himself loveth you." "He careth for you." "How much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him."

The apostolic letters, which are the breathings of the Spirit of God, are full of the same comfort. "If God be for us, who can be against us." "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:31-39).

"God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:4-7). "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins . . . We have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:9-14).

Here, then, are the tokens and the pledges of the love that exists in the Father for His children. Not only in the Father, but in Christ, especially, if there is any difference: for the love of Christ for his brethren is compared to the highest love known to man, the love of a bridegroom for his bride (Eph. 5:25-30).

What should hinder our joy in this love? It has not been intimated to us personally: but it has been assured to "whomsoever" and to "all," who come into a certain way of things. You have come into this way, and you walk in it. You believe the great and precious promises: you are daily striving to obey the beautiful commandments. Wherein you fail, you may have mercy and forgiveness, through the mediation of the "great high priest over the house of God," who ever liveth to make intercession for us: for, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ; and if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all iniquity."

Remember, also, for your comfort, that this love that is in God, the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ, is supreme in the heart of every member of the house to which you belong. You may not see much of it now. You may know more of being "in heaviness, through manifold temptation." You are far scattered and lonely, just now; but nothing can change the purpose of God to "gather together in one" the family of His love, that they may rejoice in His love, and in the love that will pass in unchecked and flowing stream from heart to heart in their glorified assembly.

Sustaining Love For All Occasions

Is there not, in these things, power to sustain the heart in the midst of all the "sufferings of this present time?" What could be more consoling than the confidence that the love of God protects and guides us now in the darkness and the silence: that the love of Christ is engaged solicitously on our behalf, though we cannot see or know it by mere sensation? and that, after a brief conflict with the toils, weaknesses and disappointments of our mortal years, we shall enter into a realm of being and an order of society in which love will be our atmosphere, joy our light, praise our life, and peace and glory our everlasting habitation?

There is no situation in life in which these convictions are unable to impart courage, and nobleness and purity.

Are you a servant? Care not for it. It is but for a time; you are Christ's free man or woman, to be manifest in no merely sentimental manner at his coming. Have you to work for unlovely employers, on whom your service seems thrown away, and for whom all natural heart-motive would fail? Redeem your part by acting it, as Paul recommends, "in singleness of heart as unto Christ, not with eye service, as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart: with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord and not unto men."

Are you engaged in uncongenial employment? As a conscientious servant of Christ, with heart a-lit with hope, you can attend to it in the spirit of the divine command, which says, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might:" and in the confidence expressed in the Psalm which says, "Thy needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever."

Are you dissatisfied with the smallness of your sphere and the limited nature of the service you can render? Be comforted by the thought that small things are often very

important; that large ways might not be so useful in your particular case; and that it is possible for you in a small sphere to do what is, after all, the utmost a man can do in any sphere, and that is, to faithfully make the very best use of the opportunity God gives, knowing that the small will be accepted equally with the great at the hands of Him with whom "it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."

It will be helpful, too, to remember that it is the faithful filling of a small place that is always exhibited to us in the Lord's teaching as the ground of exaltation to great things at his coming.

Have you to mix with ungodly company and to endure the opposition of the scornful? The memory of the Lord's own experience of this line of things, and the recollection that it is in temptation and difficulty that righteousness is brought forth for honour and comfort in the day of the Lord, will reconcile you to your lot, and enable you to turn that which is evil into good.

Have you no comfort, no love, no consolation? Build your heart in God. God loves and guides now, and has unspeakable goodness in store. Remember that it was not as a beautiful form of words that Christ said, "Blessed be ye poor . . . blessed are ye that hunger now . . . blessed are ye that weep now . . . blessed are ye when men shall hate you." He said these things because they are true, and that they might be realised by those to whom they refer while yet in their tribulation. Such shall laugh: shall be filled: shall be comforted: shall inherit the kingdom — in faith of which they can endure in the face of all the storms that may howl through the wintry land of their probation.

Are none of these things your experience? Are you, on the contrary, well off? Master of your own actions? Blessed with leisure, means, honour and friends? There is no need to be distressed, as I have known some distressed, with a fear that in such circumstances, it is impossible for our lives to be in harmony with God. God has use for a variety of servants in His house. You have to estimate your case scripturally, measure it, and handle it according to what is written, and all will be well.

Do not get away from the Scriptures, either by neglect, or by unscriptural doctrines of things. Accept God's guidance for such cases: "To whom much is given, of them much shall be required." "Charge them that are rich . . . that **they be rich in good works**, ready to distribute, willing

to communicate.” “Mind not high things: condescend to men of low estate:” While the brother of low degree is to rejoice that he is exalted by the truth, “the rich” is to rejoice “in that he is made low” (James 1:10), that is, he is not to be ashamed of the humbling associations of the truth, or to stand apart as if he were of higher consequence in the body of Christ, but rather to take joyfully the only opportunity he has of partaking of the sufferings of Christ and the afflictions of the gospel.

But it is mostly the poor and the afflicted that are called to the Kingdom; such is God’s appointment and no man can change it. It is mostly among their ranks that the elect will be found. It is mostly these that need the consolation afforded by the truth in a time of trouble; and to these chiefly I have made bold to address these wandering remarks.

Robert Roberts.

April, 1885.

(Brother Roberts included a section entitled: “The Final Consolation” with this letter, which we have included in a place of its own).

"NOT AS I WILL"

*Blindfolded and alone, I stand
With unknown thresholds on each hand;
The darkness deepens as I grope,
Afraid to fear, afraid to hope.
Yet this one thing I learn to know
Each day more surely as I go,
That doors are open, ways are made,
Burdens are lifted or are laid
By some great law, unseen and still
Unfathomed purpose to fulfil;
"Not as I will."*

*Blindfolded and alone, I wait,
Loss seems too bitter, gain too late;
Too heavy burdens in the load,
And too few helpers on the road;
And joy is weak and grief is strong,
And years and days so long, so long.
Yet this one thing I learn to know
Each day more surely as I go,
That I am glad the good and ill
By changeless laws are ordered still
"Not as I will."*

*"Not as I will," the sound grows sweet
Each time my lips the words repeat.
"Not as I will," the darkness feels
More safe than light when this thought steals
Like whispered voice to calm and bless
All unrest and all loneliness.
"Not as I will," because the One
Who loves us first and best has gone
Before us on the road, and still
For us must all his love fulfil —
"Not as we will."*

THE FINAL CONSOLATION

"We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. . . And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:22-28).

THE FINAL CONSOLATION

This formed part of Brother Roberts' fourth letter. In it he attempts to describe the ultimate joy awaiting the faithful at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, indeed, this must form the basis of all real comfort and encouragement at the present. We labour for a day that is to come, not for the moment. And we must realise this in all our activities, whether they be for the extension of the Truth, the upbuilding of brethren, Ecclesial labours, or our personal affairs. All are temporary, and the eternal is yet to be manifested. There is nothing permanent in our activities now, apart from those divine virtues that we build into our lives, and which will form the foundation of the clothing upon of divine nature in the Age to come. We see this clearly in the history of the Truth. Look at the records of Israel: they pass through periods of triumph and disaster, of spiritual development and decline. The labours of a Hezekiah are followed by the destructive efforts of a Manasseh; the reforms of a Josiah are overthrown by a Zedekiah; the Temple is destroyed to be rebuilt to be destroyed.

The same records are found in the development and decline of Ecclesias. Where, today, are the seven ecclesias of Asia? What of the faithful labours of earnest brethren who worked to establish those lampstands? That which they established was overthrown when others took over and undermined their influence and work.

So, in all that we do, our eyes must look towards the future, and we must labour as unto the Lord and not unto man. So we read of Christ:

"Look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).

The "joy set before Jesus" was something real and tangible to his mind, and not a mere theory. He thought upon it to such an extent that it filled his future horizon, and by its very brilliance, as when one looks directly into the dazzling light of the sun, shut out much of the sorrow and shame along the pathway that led to it.

We are told to "look unto" this example, and "consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself."

Paul, likewise had his clear vision of the future. He told the Romans:

"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

To the Corinthians he wrote:

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for

us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

His eyes were centred on eternal things such as man of the flesh could not see. He recognised that the things of the present (buildings, business, fleshly achievement, success) are temporal and shadowy, mere illusions; whereas the things of the future represented matters of substance, eternal realities. With eyes set on them, he was not misled with the glitter and glamour of the present. Like Moses, he endured as "seeing the invisible" (Heb. 11:27).

How can we do that? By studying the Word so as to create a mental picture of the future. When we read of Christ's coming, let us try to picture it in mind; when we consider the Judgment Seat, let us attempt to stand before him at Sinai; when we think on the law going forth from Zion and the Word of Yahweh from Jerusalem to instruct and guide a world at present in darkness, let us consider the problems facing the world at the moment, and the wisdom by which they will be solved.

A close study of the prophetic Scriptures will enable us to do this, and expositions such as *Elpis Israel* and *Eureka* can assist us in our quest.

In these *Letters to the Elect in a Time of Trouble*, Brother Roberts attempted to provide an imaginary picture of the future, in which he describes the great joy of meeting with such worthies as Abraham, David and others, and joining with them in communal worship in the Temple.

He does not present this picture as factual, but rather as a basis for further meditation and thought on the part of his readers, and for that reason we reproduce it here. We may smile at the idea of electric trams conveying some of the worshippers from point to point in the city *Yahweh Shammah*, but this is little different from the thought sometimes expressed today that television will be the means whereby "every eye shall see him"! It is most unlikely that an individual saint will be found wandering towards Abraham's palace as suggested in the narrative, but such embellishments of the thought provided are not meant to be taken literally.

We suggest, therefore, that after reading *The Final Consolation* the reader determines to turn to the prophetic Scriptures, and develop his own conception of what the future will reveal. Where we have thought helpful, we have included footnotes to the description given by Brother Roberts. Solomon wrote: "Where there is no vision the people perish" (Prov. 29:18). Let us so create a mental vision of the future that it becomes a compelling influence for the present, causing us to "earnestly desire the coming of the day of God" (2 Pet. 3:12 — R.V.).

— H.P.M.

The Final Consolation

It is a picture, but not a fancy. It is beautiful, but not a fable. It is ravishing to the imagination, and yet the presentment of truth as practical and actual and tangible as any sight to be seen at any time in the humdrum street of a modern city. It comes direct to us on the guarantee of Him who holds heaven and earth in His hand — who, having cursed, can bless: who, having smitten, can heal; who, having caused us to know the misery of His withdrawn countenance from the earth, and the consequent prevalence of disorder and death, can gladden our eyes by the spectacle of the tabernacle of God with men, and human life a beautiful and holy and joyful thing for ever.

Come to the land of promise in the day of its glory — not as you are now — burdened with infirmity, with a nature easily fatigued, eye soon dimmed, power soon spent, and having but scant capacity to rise to the surrounding sublimities of the universe, or to apprehend sympathetically the subtle glories of the Spirit. Come, when it has been said to you, as to Joshua, "Take away the filthy garments from him. . . . I will clothe thee with a change of raiment." Come when mortality no longer weighs you to the earth, and when you know the new experience of having "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Come when you can step lightly and joyously abroad upon the earth in the freedom and power of spirit nature; when the cup of life mantles full and sparkling to the brim; when the strong, penetrating eye looks out of a glad heart to behold in all things the unfolded love, and wisdom, and glory of God; when every thought is a joy, every movement a pleasure; every breath the inspiration of an ecstasy that can only find fit expression in praise to Him that sits upon the throne.

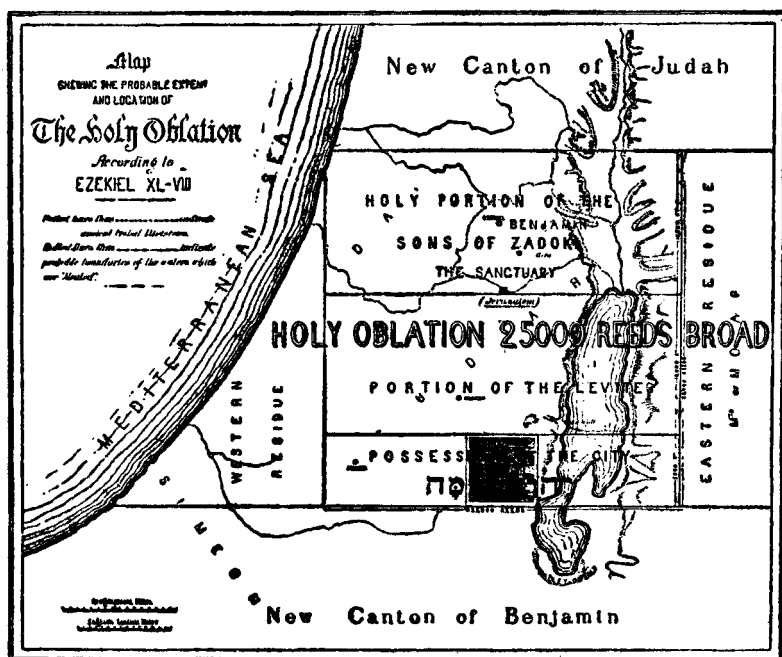
In such a state, any land, any configuration of country, would furnish suitable sphere. But God puts His jewels in fit settings. He hath called and glorified His children, and "He hath prepared for them a city" — a city having foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. Abraham sojourned in the geographical area of this city — in the land of promise — as in a strange country; but that is now long past. Forsaken and hated for ages, the land, at that time not far ahead, is now "an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations." God has fulfilled His promise, and has made "her wilderness like Eden — her desert like the garden of the Lord."

"Come and see." We go: we stand on the hills of Judea, now no longer sterile and wild. They are clad with glorious vegetation, of every form and fragrance. The hills are clothed with pleasant woods, and the valleys rejoice in the smiling beauties of a rich cultivation — field and vineyard, fruits and flowers, corn and wine. The air is clear and warm, and laden with pleasant odour. The view on all sides is magnificent and far-reaching. No smoke obscures the landscape, no fog on the valleys, no mist on the hills. The sky is cloudless, and the sun pours his healing flood of light on rejoicing land and ocean. The whirr of pleasant insect; the musical song of bird helps the sense of gladness that fills the air. Near are pleasant homesteads, standing each in its own plot or portion, neatly trimmed, well kept. Below in the valley, towns and hamlets, peopled by righteous Israelites are visible in the far receding distance, clearly visible in this transparent atmosphere in which everything appears nearer than it is. Jerusalem is faintly visible on our northern horizon.

Let us hasten in that direction. Where we are is only the profane portion of the land — a scene of peace and righteousness and plenty, truly, but not comparable to "the holy portion of the land." Come to the holy portion of the land — the land given as an oblation to the Lord. We approach Jerusalem, or rather Yahweh Shammah (the new name of the new city) from the south. It stands in the southernmost section of the holy portion. It is an immense city, built upon a plan of perfect symmetry and proportion. It is very unlike the huddled clusters of human dwellings called towns with which we have been familiar. The general plan is an exact square, marked by an outer wall. The square is of enormous extent measuring nine miles through at any point. The wall is of bright stone, and adorned with towers at regular distances. We only see the south wall. It stretches away right and left further than the eye can follow. It is over nine miles long on the south side, and on all the other sides the same. There are lofty ornamental gates at regular distances. We descend from the overlooking hill and enter by one of these gates. We notice at a glance the stately character of the city. The streets are straight and wide, and shaded with trees, and, at regular distances, open out into squares and crescents. The houses are not high, and stand apart in gardens except where here and there, palatial blocks of buildings spring from the midst of the squares. We asked what these are, and are informed

that they are reception houses, for the accommodation of the visitors who daily come in crowds from all parts.

There is an immense number of the people in the city, but the city is so vast that they do not appear numerous, except at certain points, as we pass along. Their aspect is such as we never saw in any city crowd before — so



quiet, yet so cheerful; so brightly interested in everything, yet so orderly and respectful; so apparently cultured and well-to-do, yet having none of the fussiness and arrogance usually associated with prosperity. All are well clad, cleanly, intelligent, good, righteous and happy — no boisterous merrymaking — no foolish banter — no unseemly utterance. They are a few of the happy subjects of the kingdom of God. They have come from all parts of the earth to do homage to the king — wives and families with them, leaving behind them prosperous homesteads and occupations to which they will return in a little season.

We hasten in a straight line along our nine-mile avenue of picturesque and happy human habitation — (we could

take the help of an electric tram if we liked; for such has been provided in all the thoroughfares for the use of the people: but, in our new state, we prefer to walk; we can quicken our pace, when we want to do so, by gliding along in the air, skimming the surface of the road, as we dreamt of in our mortal days). We get out at the gate of Judah; opposite which, after crossing an ornamental common of about half a mile in breadth that runs round the entire city, there opens a magnificent highway running in a straight line in a northern direction towards the temple which is distant about 30 miles.

Along this highway we proceed. It is very broad, and of noble aspect. A line of tall trees in a broad band of turf divides it in the centre, and again in the middle of each side, giving four spacious roadways running side by side, lined with trees and bordered with turf and flowers. The country on each side is laid out in fields and estates, which are in the occupation of the Levites of the second order who serve the temple, whose lands, however, are accessible to visitors at all times.

The country becomes more magnificent at every step. At certain points, side roads strike off and return in many turnings and windings to the main road again. These side roads lead through woody solitudes of paradisaic beauty.

Let us go down one of these roads, and behold the fulfilment of the promise that Yahweh would make the place of His feet glorious. All is quiet, comforting, and beautiful. There is no dankness, but only a sense of bracing relief in the shade they give: no wetness on the ground, but only a pleasant soft hardness. There are no walls or fences at the side of the road. You may walk straight off the road on to velvet turf under the trees and among the shrubs. Here you find all kinds of fruit growing — all kinds of flowers in bloom. You are at liberty to put forth your hand and do as you will. How delicious the odour everywhere! We stroll and stroll. We come upon a break in the wood where the ground descends into a gorge. We see clear out to the side of an opposite hill. A brook murmurs past where we stand. The sun streams over all. What a delicious hush! What a sense of joy in every fibre of being. We enjoy the scene for a few moments, when hark! there is a burst of music! It comes rolling towards us from the top of the opposite hill. What is it? It is a mixture of voices and instruments — stringed instruments. How beautiful! The voices so musical, so full and correct — the instruments

so adapted to the voices. There must be at least 100 people. It is beautiful! It is ravishing! We stand and listen. We do not know the piece yet it seems familiar. It is a psalm of praise to God. We hear it out and then all falls quiet. We would like to make the acquaintance of the company. We direct our steps towards the top of the hill. Going along an upward leading path, we see people coming towards us. As we go forward, we approach them. They look enquiringly and smilingly at us: we look enquiringly and smilingly at them. We are not in the least embarrassed: only we were silent. Then the foremost of their company — a fresh elderly* man with noble look — so majestic, yet so friendly — with such exquisite tenderness of manner, and yet such kingliness of carriage — breaks the silence. He speaks in Hebrew, but we seemed to understand it quite naturally. He** says —

"You are friends, I know."

"We are."

"Friends of God?"

"Praise God, yes."

"You have come in a happy time — the time of favour of Zion."

"Yes, it is a time we have long waited for."

"So have we all. God's word is sure, and has come to pass."

"Whither hail ye from?"

"Britain."

"Oh Britain — Tarshish — yes; the most celebrated of the isles of the Gentiles. God has made great use of her in bringing about Israel's deliverance. We have just been indulging in a psalm on the subject."

"Yes, we heard you; we were greatly delighted. We should like to hear it again."

"Should you? Well, there is nothing to hinder. There is an open space at the foot of this gorge where it would be convenient."

We cannot express the indefinable pleasure we feel as we walk together down the hillside towards the spot indicated. As we walk, we say —

* The indications of Scripture are that the faithful will shed their age in the immortal state, and appear in all the vigor of the prime of life. The angels appeared on earth as "young men" (Mark 16:5), and Isaiah predicts: "They that wait upon Yahweh shall renew their strength . . . they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40:31). They will show in their appearance a strength of body that will match their intellectual strength of mind.

** There is what we might style a poetical licence taken by Brother Roberts in this imaginary conversation, for in reality, there will be a general gathering of immortal saints, and fraternisation together at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Doubtless, at that time, all the approved will have seen the Lord and his more intimate friends, and therefore will not need the introductions suggested in this imaginary picture. Nevertheless, at some time or other, we must be introduced to such as Abraham and David.

"Might we be so bold as to ask who your company are?"

"They are a small band of the Lord's people, settled now in these parts, who have come out for an evening stroll. You ought to know who we are. You look as if you belonged to the Lord's people yourselves."

"Well in truth, we do; and we instinctively felt that you were a company of the saints — the immortal saints. Yet we felt fain not to presume on this our first visit to this most blessed realm."

"Have you been among the dead, then, my friends?"

"No; we belong to the current generation. We were alive at the coming of the Lord."

"Ah! you have been favoured not to see corruption."

"We do not feel it has been a greater favour than that enjoyed by those who, by a momentary wink as it were, escaped from the vanity of human life, as it was in the Lord's absence, into the glory revealed at his return."

"Well, there is something to be said on that score. For one, I should not have liked to live all the days that divided my mortal life from resurrection."

"How long might the interval have been?"

"Nigh three thousand years."

"Whom may we have the honour of speaking to?"

The old man (looking so young in his hoary hairs) paused. Those near him who had gathered close to us, and were eagerly enjoying our conversation, said, "Who do you think?" We looked enquiringly.

"Guess?"

"We cannot."

"Who wrote most of the Psalms?"

We bowed with unspeakable pleasure.

"King David? Oh! Happy day!"

Our majestic interlocutor said,

"Even so: a morning without clouds, as the Lord promised."

Arrived at the bottom of the glade, we stood together and sang the anthem we had heard them sing on the top of the hill — David leading. Oh, such voices! Oh, such blending of liquid melodies! Oh, such fervent pouring of the soul into the meaning of the words. The delight was unutterable. Preparing to resume the journey, we are asked whither bound.

"The temple."

"Not tonight?"

"We had thought of it."

"Put it off till tomorrow. Come with us. We spend the night at Abraham's palace. There we shall introduce you to a number of friends."

That proposal is overpoweringly good. But we are not embarrassed. We would have been so in the old mortal. In the new man to which we have attained, we are simply at home in a perfect satisfaction. We express our pure pleasure at the prospect, and start off with our company,

numbering about 200 persons — men and women — all so lovely to look at and so bright to talk to. We find they comprise Jonathan, Asaph, Nathan, Uriah, Bathsheba, and a number who were David's intimates in the days of his flesh. Others we do not know. We ascertain that they form David's personal circle in the new order of things.

Abraham's palace to which we are bent is some distance off. It stands within seven miles of the temple, and we are still 20 miles away. There is need for speed, as the softening light warns us of the approach of the shades of evening. So, at a signal from our leader, we resort to the angelic mode of locomotion, and by a simple act of the will, are able to propel ourselves through the air by a slight motion of the limbs at a short distance from the ground. We went at a rapid pace, but it was not at all fatiguing, and there was no sense of chill from rushing through the air. On the contrary, it was a delightful exercise. We seemed to get along like a company on very fleet bicycles, but without their violent contortions.

The air was balmy; and our progress through it only seemed to give us a higher sense of its exhilarating power, and bring out more distinctly the sweetness of the odours exhaling from the paradisaic vegetation clothing hill and dale.

In an hour's time we arrive at Abraham's palace — a magnificent pile, standing in a wooded seclusion. He has evidently a large company at home. They are waiting us expectantly. We are announced while yet a good way off, and they all come out on the balconies and corridors in front of the spacious building, and salute us as we pass within the grounds in front. Ornamental tables are arranged for a repast. There is a pleasant mingling on the green sward — much brilliant talking and silvery laughter — everyone so bright and well. Then they all sit down — about 600 people. A venerable figure rises — not bent or aged, but noble in the air of ripe maturity — hair and flowing beard of pure white; a countenance full of gravity and kindly repose, but having no sign of weakness. He calls upon every glorified son and daughter of the Lord God Almighty to give thanks to the Possessor of Heaven and earth for the overflowing bounty of His goodness in Christ Jesus. In few meet and sonorous words, he presents the offering of thanksgiving. Then the other kingly old man stands also and says, "It is a good and pleasant thing to give thanks to the Lord."

... "Let us praise the Lord!" and the whole company rise with a readiness that seems like an elastic bound, and all eyes on David, who raises his hand to lead, they break forth into a psalm with such fervour of shout, such emphatic enunciation of words and such beauty of musical utterance, that the mere exercise seems to rouse them into a fresh glow of the heavenly arbour that is normal with them all. They then sit down, and partake of grapes and various fruits. There are cooked dishes of various kinds for those who prefer. All is partaken of with perfect gastronomic relish.

There is much pleasant talk and interchange of animated glances between persons at different parts of the table. All eat heartily, but not heavily.* There are no heavinesses or indigestions afterwards. It is not possible. The food partaken of becomes the subject of a slow, spiritual combustion, which assimilates every atom of it to the energy of the spiritual body; and the process of this combustion is a source of pleasure to the eaters.

The repast finished, there is a breaking up of the company into groups, and an indiscriminate commingling, affording the opportunity of private snatches of conversation with any who may choose. In this way, we approach Abraham, who stands in the centre of a group, conversing in a deliberate, cordial, but stately manner. We listen, and do not presume to take part, though having many questions we would like to put. We know there will be plenty of time afterwards.

After two hours spent in this way, we unite in another song, after which we are all shown to separate apartments for the night. We are not tired. We had no inclination to

* The partaking of food by immortals, though possible (the risen Christ ate the food given him) will not be at all necessary as it is today. In fact, in the change to which all will be subjected who attain unto the state of incorruptibility (1 Cor. 15:53), the body itself will be altered. Paul declared: "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them" (1 Cor. 6:13). Thus the internal organs of the body will be completely changed. They are there today, to make provision for digestion and absorption of food; such as will be entirely unnecessary then. Food may be partaken of by immortals in the Kingdom for pleasure (they will feast at Jerusalem, before Christ, and elsewhere) but will not be necessary for the sustaining of life. Of course Brother Roberts recognised this, and we merely add this footnote for the guidance of others. We do not think that the normal eating habits of breakfast, lunch and dinner will be practised by the saints in the future.

go to sleep. We feel quite as bright as mortals usually do in the morning, and a little brighter, I fancy. Still it was an acceptable change to enter a cool, lightly-constructed, pleasant chamber, with slight and elegant furnishings, to spend the night alone. There was no darkness. There was a glorious moon overhead, showing a brightness rarely visible in western countries. The chamber was lit electrically; and, in addition to this, we felt in ourselves a light that made us feel as if darkness could not be. The night quickly passes: sometimes we pace the room in reflection: sometimes recline on the top of an elegant couch (no need for getting under the clothes); sometimes get up and read, and sometimes sing. When morning arrives, the sun pours her golden flood in at the windows, and we are ready for a new day without any sense of fatigue such as we should be sure to experience after such a night in mortal days.

Looking out at the windows, the eye takes in a noble stretch of country, looking away behind the beautiful grounds of the palace, just in front. The country descends towards the Jordan in the distance, beyond which rises a rampart of purple hills running north and south. To the right and left, in the near neighbourhood of the palace, are distinctly marked spurs of the ridge on which the palace itself stands covered with wood. It is a picture of seclusion and peace in the morning brightness and the balmy air, yet without loneliness. Pleasant sounds and the occasional sight of a visitor stepping out to enjoy the scene, remind us that we are in the habitation of intelligence and love — in one of the abiding places of the Father's house now set up on earth.

Descending to a great hall on the ground floor, we find a large company mustered, joyous, bright and gay. I observe there is none of the quiet fatigue that mortals experience after an evening's social exertion such as we had had. All are fresh and lively. Exchanging hearty greetings with those next us, we sit down and wait the progress of events, our uppermost desire being an early departure to see the temple.

Shortly, a psalm is proposed, in which all take part in the effective manner of the previous evening. Then the God of Abraham is addressed by Abraham, the father of us all, in simple, earnest words, that take us all with him to the throne of the Eternal. Shortly after, we are summoned to another room for the morning meal. Out we throng in pleasant crowds, and are conducted to a large banqueting

hall, with skylight dome roof and walls largely constructed of glass, on which vines are trained, and which are adorned with various ornamental plants. Bright tables occupying the hall from end to end groan under the load of all good things, interspersed with flowers. Abraham calls on David, who gives thanks with a fervour that thrills us all, and evokes a loud "Amen" from every mouth. We asked if Isaac and Jacob were present, and are told they are not; that they had palaces of their own not a great distance away, and that though frequent visitors, they had more often to act the part of host to the numbers that came to see them from all points. We might see them in the course of the day at the Temple, as there was to be a special gathering of all the saints.

"Shall we see Moses?"

"Very likely; he is always prominent on such occasions."

"And the prophet like unto Moses?"

"We are nothing without Him. In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

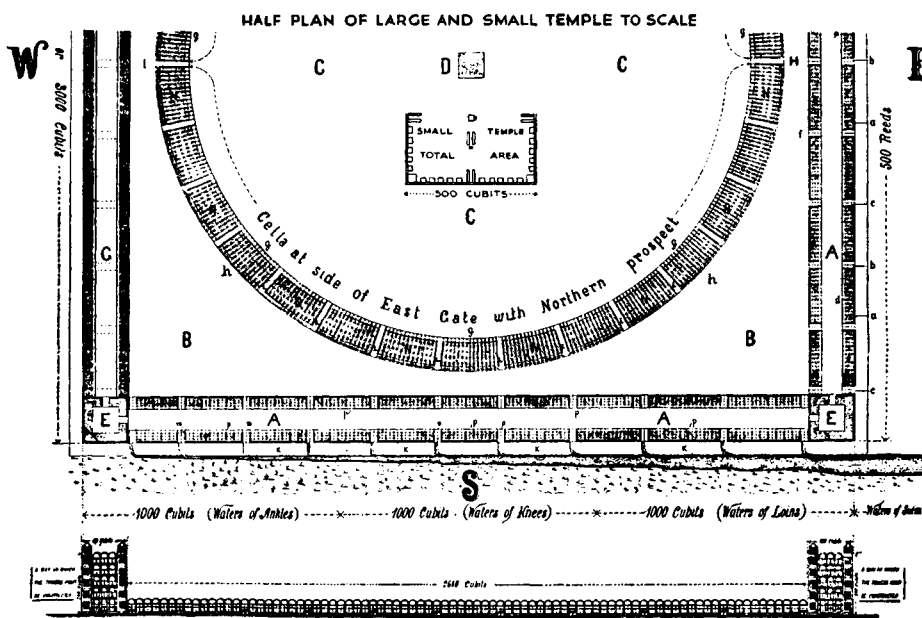
We feel almost overpowered at the prospect of seeing the Lord Jesus in all his glory.

Breakfast being over, we discover there will be no delay in getting our desire gratified. The whole company are shortly ready, and on the road that lies in the direction of the Temple, going south and west from Abraham's palace. The road lies through a mountainous district, exuberant with the choicest vegetation, and the morning air is rich with the odour of flowers.

We are not long in accomplishing the distance at a moderate walk. The intercourse we enjoy with first one and then another in that superb company would quickly while away a desert journey. What is its goodness in the holy ground of Zion whom the Lord had comforted, as it is written "He will make the wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord?" Truly joy and gladness were found therein — thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

At last the temple bursts upon our view as we round the corner of a hill on which we stand at a considerable elevation. How shall I describe it? It is about a mile off from where we stand. It looks like a square-set symmetrical city of palaces. It is not what we have always understood by a temple: that is, it is not a building, an edifice, however large, but an immense open structure of light and airy parts, all of enormous size, yet all resembling

one another, and covering such an area that they do not look so large as they are. What we see from where we stand is, of course, the outer wall; but it is a very different thing from what is suggested to us by a wall. It is in reality a long line of arches standing upon a solid basement, and stretched from east to west for a distance of over a mile. There must be nearly 200 arches in the line. Between every dozen arches or so is an entrance gate, towering considerably above the arches; and at each end of the line is an enormous tower, giving a well-marked finish to the wall. We can see inside through the arches, but what we see seems simply like a forest of palace-like structures, with a hill top shooting through the centre, and crowned with what looks like a



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See "The Temple of Ezekiel's Prophecy" by H. Sully.

shrine. We advance towards the splendid structure — the tabernacle of the Most High — the place of the soles of his feet where he dwells in the midst of the children of Israel for ever.

Shortly, we come upon a bridgeless stream of crystal water that comes flowing from under the house, and runs due east towards the Dead Sea, flanked with trees along its banks. This we cross with a graceful movement, passed gently through the air from one bank to the other. We are now near "the house," and see of what an immense size the arches are — about 120 feet high. Through open arches, they are latticed, and plants which look like vines are trained among the lattice work.

We enter by one of the gates, and find ourselves in the first court, open to the air. Here are thousands upon thousands of people who have come for the special day mentioned at the breakfast table. It strikes me as peculiar that the country we had come through was so lacking of people in view of this multitude. It is explained to me that the public access to the temple is from the south only, by the highway we had traversed the day before, and that to the north, and east, and west, of the temple is private to those who have to do with the service of the temple. As we pass in, the people made an avenue, and bow themselves in sincere reverence to a company of the Sons of God. Crossing the outer court (a breadth of 200 feet), we enter a gate of the inner range of arch-building which resembles the outer wall, but stands a little higher; passing through, we are in the inner court, of similar dimensions to the outer court (also open to the sky). Before us, about 200 feet further on, stands the temple proper — not a square building, but an immense circle of arch building, three miles in circumference. This circle of building fills the whole view from right to left, gradually diminishing with the distance. We enter this circle by the gate opposite us, and passing through the building, find ourselves inside the inner and holiest precincts of the house, viz., an immense circle nearly a mile across, open to the sky. The floor of this circle was the ground, not flat, however, but rising gradually on all sides to the centre.

At the time of our arrival this interior space was nearly empty; but by-and-by, companies like our own began to arrive from all sides of the circle. As they arrive, they enter the circle, and take up a position which apparently had been assigned beforehand; for servitors, who were in charge, all round the building, escort the new arrivals to their places. These servitors were graceful, pleasant-mannered, agile, well-formed young men in loose robes.

(One of our company whispers to me they are angels*). As the time wears on, the arrivals became more numerous, until there is one continual stream from all sides. There is on all hands a pleasant hum, as of a multitude conversing. Presently, the circle is full, and the inflow ceased. Quiet and order settle down. The assembly presents an imposing appearance, packed together in a picturesque and living mass as far as the eye could reach. The prevailing costume is white with gold fittings. I have not asked who they are. I instinctively feel they are the assembled body of Christ; and my rapturous interest in them is only held in check by the greater thought that Christ is presently to be introduced.

Where was he? I ask my companion. He is not yet arrived. His palace is some 30 miles off in a straight line east of the temple, standing in the paradisaic glories of "the prince's portion," overlooking the Jordan valley. The prince's portion is an extensive tract of country flanking the temple district, east and west. In both portions, the prince is surrounded by special friends, to whom he has assigned seats of residence and honour. The portion to the west is a sea-board, looking out on the Mediterranean, where also the prince has a palace; but on state occasions, his arrival is from the palace on the east.

This I learn in the interval while we are waiting. — Presently, a hush falls on the assembly: then a brightness seems to break out simultaneously from all parts of it, as if hidden electric footlights had been suddenly turned on all over the building. Every face glows with light: every garment becomes lustrous and shining. It is not an oppressive brightness, but an atmosphere of subdued light and warmth that seems to diffuse a sense of unspeakable comfort and joy.

In a few moments more, the air over our heads becomes alive with light and life. A multitude of the heavenly host became visible; the brightness grows to glory:

* Again, a little touch of poetic licence. The fact that such were angels would be perfectly obvious to an immortal. Further, whilst it is true that angels will be present at the inaugural opening ceremony of the Temple (Heb. 1:6 — RV; Rev. 5:11), their work, in the age to come, will be taken over by immortalised saints (Heb. 2:5), who will thus act as Christ's servitors in all necessary appointments. Nor will it be necessary for one immortal saint to ask of another that he point out Christ to him, for all must first appear before the Lord. Once again, we emphasise, that Brother Roberts recognised all that we here state, but desire to bring the picture within the scope of humble men and women of this age.

there is a quivering excitement of rapturous expectation; a sound as of trees swayed by the wind; a movement at the eastern entrance, and, lo, a dazzling figure, escorted right and left by a shining phalanx, emerges into view. Instantly, the angelic host overhead breaks into acclamation, in which the whole assembled multitude joins. It is nothing like the "applause" to be heard in mortal assemblies. There is all the abandon with it that is ever manifested at the most enthusiastic meeting, but there is with this, a gentle fervour and musical cadence that seems to send waves of thrilling sweetness to the remotest corner.

The Lord Jesus advances to the midst of the assembly. All eyes are on him; his demeanour is royal, yet simple and loving. He passes, there is silence. Then he lifts his eyes and looks gravely round, not all round; and in a voice that is gentle, kind, strong and exultant all in one, in tones rich, but not strong, and yet as distinctly audible as if spoken in a small room to one person, he said, "I have been to my Father and your Father. It was needful that I should go away; but I have come again as I said, in the glory of my Father and his holy angels. Ye have had sorrow; but now ye rejoice, and your joy no man any more taketh from you. It is written, in the midst of my brethren will I sing praise. Now, praise our God, all ye His servants."

Then an electric spasm of joy seems to pass through the assembly. There is a rustle, and a preparation, and a fixing of attention to Christ. He lifts his hand, and, as if by an inspiration, the whole assembly takes the lead from him, and breaks into a transport of tumultuous and glorious sound. Every energy is strained to the utmost. Mortal nerves could not stand it; but the assembly of the immortals seem to revel and gather increasing strength with every higher and higher effort of musical strain. "Blessing and honour and glory be unto him that sits upon the throne and unto the lamb for ever. Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and honour and glory, and blessing. Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, and hast made us unto our God, kings and priests and we shall reign with thee upon the earth. The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of Our Lord and of His Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. Amen."

It would be possible to speak of the dispersal of the assembly (to meet again at fixed and regular times); and of the intercourse in private afterwards; the delightful identifi-

cation of this one and that — Joseph, Moses, Isaiah, Paul; of the visits to first one palace and then another throughout all the holy portion of the land; and of the arrangements for departure of this saint and that to distant parts of the world, to lead and govern mankind. But let this glimpse suffice of a glory that is certain to be revealed in due time, and which, when it comes, will remain for ever.

Hoping and praying to be permitted, with you, to occupy even the least place in the Kingdom of God, when the sufferings of this present time shall have wrought in us their appointed work, let me write myself once more,

Your fellow-sojourner and servant.

In the joy of faith and the patience of hope through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Robert Roberts.

“Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Ecclesia by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen”
(Ephesians 3:20-21).

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

"I had a few fragmentary ideas on the events immediately connected with Christ and his Bride when we are called to the judgment, and I began to transfer them to paper under the title of "Espousals." But I felt that the subject could not be suitably rendered in prose: it was too leaden for such a theme. So I attempted a metrical rendering. The theme is delightful. I have revelled in its contemplation." — MARY G. BRABYN. Many of the thoughts expressed in this poem have been derived from "The Song of Solomon"

The Marriage of the Lamb

Bride.—Hark! 'Tis the voice of my beloved. Yes 'tis he.

Bridegroom.—My Fairest one, come forth. The wintry clouds are past,

Night's shadows flee. Come forth, my dove,
That I thy face may see. The storm subsides,
The morning dawns. Arise thou and come away.

Bride.—Is this a vision that I see? It is the Lord.
A sweet reality. My heart be still,
Await his will.

My Lord, I see thee face to face and know
E'en as I'm known. My joy is full, and faith is lost in sight.
When summoned to thy presence, the tension of
Expectancy relaxed so quick, that for
The moment, I was almost stunned, and then
The angel gave me strength and sweet assurance
Of his mission. Fear, joy, suspense held me
Entranced. With strange precision my life stood out
Before me, like some bold promontory
At sunset, with rugged outline, sterile heights,
Seams, chasms, all disclosed. Flashes of duty done
Gave place to thoughts of waywardness
And oft repeated failures, and these in turn
Dimm'd off before the hope of mercy and forgiveness.
I thought of all thy sweetness and compassion.
And then again I loved thee so. And with this thought
I girded up my loins and felt that I could stand.

Bridegroom.—My heart was ever with thee. I longed
With strong desire the day of thy perfection.
Thy love and loyalty to me, are now
Thy Bridal robes, and ornaments most costly.
Orient gems, fit emblem of thy purity,
Circle thy brow, while chains of beaten gold
Entwine our hearts to throb in unison.
How fair thou art, my love! How passing fair!

Bride.—My lord, 'tis but the reflex of thy beauty.
Thou art resplendent. A sun dismantled
Of his storm clouds, whose beams have found
A resting place in me.

Bridegroom.—Clear as the sun. Fair as the moon
Effulgent with one light.

Bride.—My Lord, what means this transformation scene
When I arrived at Sinai, it was a desert
Great and terrible.
With scorching rocks and arid plains,
Whose silence was disturbed by noises
Weird and horrible.
And when the eye sought out some object, to
Relieve the stern sublimity of solitude,
Some dismal creature stalked abroad
With piteous moan that made the dreary
Scene more drear. Or dancing satyr held
Nocturnal revelry. Or beast of prey
Howled over ravin wolfishly.
And hill tops far and near caught up
The hideous wail. Such blood. Such horror.
I stood awaiting thine approach
With phalanx right and left, an angel guard.
Somehow, I seemed adjusted to the
Splendid scene of terror.
I could not utter what I felt, but still
I did not faint. I waited. Then I saw
'Midst retinue of angels bright and fair,
Thy Majesty.
My soul, the moment was supreme,
I sought some token of thy mind,
And then gave audience to thy words.
Ne'er mortal ear was greeted with such love
And admiration. The angels grew
Exultant, and with glad acclaim declared
That thou and I were altogether lovely,
When lo! as if to emphasize the charm
Dread Sinai became a smiling Eden.
What meaneth it?

Bridegroom.—The earnest of the Father's bridal gift is
this,
Which, emblematic of thine own transition,
I changed into a floral paradise.

Bride.—'Tis like thyself to weave for me this Eden
Of enchantment. What can I offer thee
Of value rare enough?

Bridegroom.—The dear delight thy presence yields
Exceeds all other gifts. Thy love to me
Is sweeter far than thy love's token.
But now new scenes await us.
Tell me, O thou in whom my soul delights,

What thinkest thou of this thy garden?

Bride.—The solitary place is glad for us,
The desert blossoms like the rose.
What ecstasy! What bliss is mine
That thou shouldst weave into our
Wedding day this bridal gift?
Not Sharon's fertile plains nor Carmel's
Fruitful hill can vie with it in
Graceful loveliness.

There seems to come from everywhere
A fragrant breath. The gentle zephyr of
The south is perfume laden. Spicery flows forth
Like spikenard or the costly myrrh.
The air is redolent of odours from
The clustering vines, and far and near I see
Profusion of ripened fruit on stately trees.
The Citron's golden fruit provides
Refreshment. Pomegranates fair
Are also here and fig trees too.
Commingling with them all I see
The lofty Palm, the Cedar, and the Shittah tree,
The Cypress, Fir and Myrtle.
And here and there the branches interlace
With overhanging leaves to form
Enchanting bowers
Listen! I hear the murmur of the water brook.
Ah, yes. I see the little rills flow down
The mountain's sides o'erlapping rocks
And sparkling in miniature cascades.
And here I see a stately stream
And there a graceful fountain,
And over all the minstrels of the wood
Give forth their melody, while shy
Gazelles and tim'rous roes bound
Over hill and valley. This is a day of
Sweet surprise where all is fair and lovely.

Bridegroom.—That thou art mine and I am thine
Completes the glory.
Thou art the Father's gift. Through him
Alone I've won thee. His power sustained
Me in the travail of my soul,
And gave me title,
To present unto myself a glorious bride
With **neither** spot nor wrinkle.

Bride.—Such lofty praise! And since I have begun

To taste love's potent draught, I would
More deeply drink, and ask thee just
One question. What didst thou see in me
So wondrous sweet?
Rough I was, and black, as Kedar's tents.
A vessel coarse, unhewn, and unsymmetrical.
Why didst thou not "despise me" —

Bridegroom.—And now a vessel bright beyond compare.
I saw thee as thou *art*, my finished work.
I wrought and fashioned thee, that
I might have thee share my joy and honour
In the service of Yahweh.
My Helpmeet, and my Queen.

Bride.—What depths of joy and high nobility
Those words involve. It was a theme I always
Loved to ponder, that thou and I should be,
To serve one Father. His will was my delight.
I ever bowed before that shrine in thought,
But when I came to practice it, and follow
Thine example, I trembled in the fight.
'Twas not the Father's fault. My
Weakness was to blame.
High rocks and tumbling boulders frightened
Me, I shivered in the dank, cold mist.
And then again grew faint with sudden heat,
And, O, the little spars! What pain they gave,
What bleeding feet!

Bridegroom.—I watched thine every footstep.
No danger of the way befell thee, but I gave
My angels charge, lest thou shouldst slip
By night, by day, unseen they compassed thee.
I grieved for all thy pain and agony,
For I had suffered too,
And knowing in myself that trial is
The wellspring of eternal joy,
I did the only thing I could —
I helped thee through.

Bride.—Through Thy compassion, Lord, I tread
This goodly, peaceful land.
For when I could not see my way,
I took the light thou gavest me,
And seemed to hold thine hand.
Indeed, sometimes in grief's dark cell,
I trimmed and oiled my lamp so well,
I felt to *see* thee near;

And then I almost feared to breathe,
Lest I should break the spell.
But, O! how sweet to realise that in
Thy calm retreat, thy thoughts should
Fix themselves on me.
And didst thou really grieve?

Bridegroom.—The Head must ever feel the motions
Of the body. 'Twas through thine agony
That I could be compacted, and fitly
Joined to thee. Thy sufferings formed
The union. And where the motions of *my*
Sorrow were expressed, that part declared itself
In sweet communion.

Bride.—My Lord, the change from sore distress to this
Transcendent joy, is bliss unspeakable.
If I would have this good to last
I must remember evil.
Those shadows of the night to me are wings,
By which I soar unmeasured heights
Of thy pure joy.
Relief so sweet should be perennial,
Then let the memory abide.

Bridegroom.—Mem'ry is a flower which never fades
In this fair garden. All pleasures here
Are inexhaustible, none turn to ashes;
All are incorruptible.
Come forth, beloved, come, and taste
A fresh delight.
'Tis meet that joy so full as ours
Should have some token.
That love so great as mine for thee
Should be expressed in other form
Than merely spoken.
Or even in the presentation
Of this fair Eden.
And so I take thee through this avenue
To where, 'midst clustering vine,
And Cyprus flowers, and roses
White and red
Stands beauty's shrine,
Within its cloistered walls
Of interlacing boughs, a festal
Board is spread for thee, my Queen,
And I will place upon thine head
A royal diadem,

And courtly honours shall attend
A courtly Queen.
Ten thousand voices of an angel choir
Shall make this changed desert ring
With acclamation of thy praise
And I will summon to my side
An angel band of servitors
To wait on me,
While I, a King will gird myself, come forth,
And wait on thee.
Aught else desirest thou?

Bride.—In regal purple I would see thee robed
And thine imperial brow adorned
With that rich crown of victory
Thine own by right divine.
Then let me be, yet more than helpmeet,
More than Queen. O, let me be
A loyal subject at thy feet
To worship thee.

Bridegroom.—Thou art my crown of victory,
My trophy of the fight. Let heaven above
Break forth in praise, and let the
Earth rejoice
That Truth and Mercy are now met
In sweet embrace,
A marriage indissoluble
Of Love celestial, with Hope terrestrial.
These are the world's true nuptials
This is the entrance into Life.

Bride.—Glory, honour, incorruptibility
Are mine. My enraptured soul!
The spirit coursing through my veins
Gives life a new momentum
I'm quickened to perceive a thousand
Things, undreamt of in my days of flesh
I feel myself a power in this great
Universal spirit, as in my days
Of dust, I used to feel myself a part
Of dust, with senses and perceptions
Built out of it and into it.
And ever moving with it in
One unvarying cycle of decay.
But now, how changed! I am a new creation
Fixed, joyous, incorruptible.
I feel a thousand pleasures welling

Up within my heart, each one with
Energy attended. My impulses
Are all in one direction, self-inciting
To obey e'en Yahweh's will.
And intellectually intent upon His wisdom
With long experience of His love,
I *cannot* feel amiss. All is supernal
I know I am element
In Yahweh's happiness,
And this is Life Eternal.

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” — Rev. 19:6-8.

FIFTH LETTER IN A TIME OF TROUBLE

A LETTER TO MY ENEMIES

May, 1885

“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings . . . desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” — 1 Pet. 2:1.

“An Israelite in whom there is no guile.” — John 1:47.

THE TWO CLASSES

People in Christ's day were the same as they are now — there were genuine men and women, and there were some decided frauds. Christ could do what we cannot do — discriminate between the one class and the other. "He knew what was in man." This ability came through divine inspiration. "The Spirit of the Lord" rested on him (Isa. 11:2-3). His varied treatment of the two classes was solemnly instructive. To the sincere and upright he was kind, sympathetic, communicative. To the make-believes he was cold, angry, and oftentimes strangely silent. When he did speak his utterances were terrible: "Ye hypocrites, ye generation of vipers." What is the lesson? Christ lives; his character, authority, and power are unaltered. Ere long, his friends and his foes are again to confront him. Loving words and crushing words will once more be heard from his lips. Let us pause. We have to appear before Christ! He will speak to us. Are we his friends or his foes? Let us search our hearts. If hypocrisy is lurking there, let us root it out. We all have the power to do this. Let us be open minded with Christ, seeking to hide nothing. Christ will show no mercy to shams. A penitent publican is more endurable in his eyes than a self-righteous scribe or Pharisee. The men and women who please Christ — who need not fear the outcome of an interview with him — are those who look upon God as a reality, and commune with Him as such, who recognise and confess their much unworthiness, and whose constant aim it is to grow better. To Christ, as to his Father, the Scripture applies: "With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure; and with the froward Thou wilt show Thyself unsavoury."

A.J.

A Letter to my Enemies

I greet you in the best of good wishes. My greeting may not be acceptable. It is nevertheless sincere, I assure you. It is my desire to bless you. I can do very little to show you this practically. I can pray: and this I do. Rarely do I bend my knee before the Maker of us all without asking Him to open your eyes wherein they may be closed: to bring your steps into paths of wisdom and love wherein they may be straying in other roads; and to attend you with His favour in so far as His will and pleasure may allow. Suffer me, then, to say a few frank words to you which can do no more harm if they fail of any good.

THE INEVITABILITY OF ENEMIES

FELLOW - SUFFERERS IN THE PRESENT EVIL STATE,

I have been recently writing to friends: and it has occurred to me to conclude my epistolary effort in a few words to you, my foes. You are not foes by my will or wish. I wish to speak words of kindness, but will not mock you with "sentimental twaddle." Nor will I attempt to propitiate your good graces with smooth words of compliment and congratulation regardless of truth. I will not utter the lie of saying that you are all honest men, disinterestedly aiming at the service of God, and differing only in your conceptions of what that service requires. Some of you, I doubt not, are so: but I am bound to recognise that fact which the Scriptures declare, and which experience compels every man of sagacious discernment to note sooner or later, that there are men who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God," and who are consequently haters of those whose love cannot run in the same channel. How many of this sort there are among you, I will not presume to judge. God knows, and will make it manifest in due time. I am concerned to note their existence just now merely as explaining some things that are otherwise inexplicable.

You are on the whole a numerous company. This fact would have distressed me at one time. When quite young, I was smitten with the beauty of the popular dictum, that it was a good thing, and a thing to aim at, to have no

enemies. I worked under the power of this idea for a good while. Had I been in a worldly line of things, I would, doubtless, have continued to do so — and very likely, with the success of other men. But, having the Bible standard before me in all things, I came to see its futility, and to perceive the reason of the saying of Christ, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you."

I found it impossible to avoid giving offence; and after many struggles against the inevitable, I quietly and grimly surrendered.

I saw that I could not prevent the making of enemies without becoming a time server, and a pleaser of men. I therefore made up my mind to accept enmity, and to adopt as the only workable policy, the policy of being on God's side in all matters, whatever the risks or the consequences. I do not mean that I gave up the idea of being friendly — far from it. I have always had the commandment before my eyes that we are to bless, and curse not: to do good to them that hate us: to pray for them that despitefully use and afflict us.

In this spirit, I have always tried to act, though frequently without the entire success I could have wished. But what I mean to say is, that having once for all made up my mind that I could not prevent the existence of enemies, and that their existence was the inevitable corollary of an endeavour to follow a course of faithfulness to divine principles, their existence ceased to be a trouble to me, in any serious sense. Dr. Thomas told me that if I followed such a course, his experience on this point would be mine. I did not quite believe him at the time. I imagined in my simplicity, that a good deal of the enmity he had to endure, was the result of his own needless brusqueness in dealing with opposition. But experience has shown me that my notions were the result of — well, in plain language, my ignorance of human nature, as it actually is, in the vast mass of the population in the present state of things upon the earth.

THE CAUSE OF ENMITY

You are not only numerous; but you are greatly diversified in the complexion of your antagonism. Many of you are enemies, because of your faith in popular theology.*

* The cause of these letters appearing was the widespread and bitter controversy at the time surrounding the question as to whether the Bible was wholly or only partly the work of inspiration. Some took the orthodox view, and this ultimately ended in division.

You sincerely hate and detest a movement that not only calls in question, but successfully disproves the claims of that faith to be considered scriptural. Of course, you don't see the successful disproving, or many of you would cease to be enemies, but you feel the force of the argument, and, as you think it a wrong argument, its very force helps to inflame your animosity through misunderstanding. Your opposition is intelligible. Your enmity is respectable, after a sort. It is, in many of your cases, the sort of enmity that Paul showed to the Christians before Christ appeared to him; and, like his, will disappear in the exhibition of the truth before your eyes at the return of Christ.

You are not all of this sort. Some of you are mere partisans of the orthodox system: you stick to it because your interests are identified with it, or because your friends belong to it. You are in a different position from the first-mentioned class. You are mere Canaanites; the hereditary upholders of the dominant superstition, destined to perish before the storm that will shortly "sweep away the refuge of lies."

But you principally belong to a class that stands nearer to scriptural things than the everyday supporter of orthodox religion. You mostly consist of those who stand more or less within the sphere that has been affected in these latter days by the revival of primitive apostolic truth. Some of you are friends of the late Alexander Campbell, who did a useful work in his day, but who could not forgive Dr. Thomas's exposure of the unscriptural features of the partly scriptural movement which he headed; and whose bitterness you have inherited against those who feel scripturally bound to take Dr. Thomas's views of things.

Some of you, again, sympathise with the style of things known as Dowieism,* in which a degree of personal worth and sociability is allied with uncertainty, and laxity, and lukewarmness in the protest of apostolic and prophetic truth against the dominant apostacy of the age: because of your sympathy with which, you entertain a pronounced antipathy to those who have had to do battle for clear and strong principles of action in past times, and who do not and cannot repent of their deeds because prompted by convictions generated by the word of truth.

* He introduced teachings which completely destroyed the fundamentals upon which the Truth is founded.

Others of you had your animosity kindled into a scorching flame by the hot wind of Renunciationism* which blew upon and blighted our little world some 12 years ago. You have never recovered from the hard feelings, nor ceased the hard speeches originating in the unhappy convulsion; and will probably have to see death or Christ here before you forgive the decisive measures that were forced on the friends of the truth at the time, by the plots that were formed against it.

There are others of you with special grievances of your own, arising out of schemes discouraged, principles opposed, doctrines condemned, dignities hurt, in collision with those who felt bound to maintain scriptural precepts and sentiments, as against what seemed your divergence from these. The most recent addition to your number consists of those who disapprove (to use the mildest word) of the strong stand that has been made against the doctrine of the partial inspiration.

BROTHER ROBERTS' ATTITUDE

Now, I wish to say to one and all of you that I entertain none of the rancour against you such as you imagine me to feel. If I cannot stand where you stand (any more than you feel able to stand where I stand) it is not because I love contention. Contention is odious to me. Fighting is one of the mournful necessities of life. I cannot escape it, but I hate it, and it is unmixed with personal enmity to any of you. I realise too well how helpless many of you are. Your organisation, your natural bias, your surroundings, the untrue things that have been told you — all make it impossible for you to take any other view, or feel any other sympathy than that which animates you. You cannot help feeling, many of you, that you are in the way of righteousness, and that I am in the way of wickedness. I recognise this sincerely, and it takes away the sting of the resentment, and even makes me feel pitiful and patient towards you, and full of yearning for the day when the infallible judge of mankind will put away misunderstandings and unite all his true servants in a glorious unity that will never be broken.

Another thing makes it impossible for me to feel very bitter towards you. Though your estimate of me is alto-

* So called because its author, Brother E. Turney, publicly renounced the principles of the Atonement proclaimed by Brother Thomas and set forth the clean flesh theory today taught by the Nazarene Group.

gether off the mark I tell you, I have not the high opinion of myself that you imagine. I know my infirmities and my shortcomings. They are not such as would be esteemed heinous by a human standard. Still, they cause me utter abasement in the presence of the Most High, and they help me to feel that, in a certain sense, I give you cause for your hard thoughts and speeches. I am not able to carry myself towards you as I should desire. Between chronic physical discomfort of body and the grimness begotten of constant collision with opposition, and too constant action in one line of things, I realise that I must appear a very repugnant person in your eyes, notwithstanding my strong desire and best efforts to sustain a different part.

But when I have said all this, I will, like Job, maintain mine integrity. I cannot admit the imputations so freely current among you. I am anxious to confess my faults. To do so affords me satisfaction; but do not bring charges I cannot own to. I do not and have not striven in any sense to serve myself. I aim not, and have not aimed at personal exaltation. I enjoy not, and never have enjoyed, the position into which circumstances have forced me. I am anxious only for the ascendancy of principles, and could hide me out of sight if they were exalted. It was a sad day for me when Dr. Thomas ceased from the land of the living. I felt as if the sun had been blotted from the sky. And my feeling ever since has been that nothing would be so great a satisfaction as the uprise of another from any quarter like him, similarly gifted with a clear eye to see divine verities, and detect human quackery; a similarly great capacity to take in the great breadths of things, and to keep details and technicalities in their proper little places; and a similarly fearless heart to be zealous for God, and to maintain the right at all human risks. I have always felt that nothing would be so congenial to me as to stand aside for such a one, and to take a very low and a glad place in co-operating with his initiative.

If God have not given me this pleasure, it is my misfortune: not my crime. Many activities have flitted across the low horizon since then. Charity has suffered them, and striven to put the best interpretation on things; but the utmost stretch of charity cannot change the nature of things and the evidence of the senses. Men who rejoice in the truth are not to be mistaken, neither can those long be mistaken with whom personal elevation is a more controlling influence than the ascendancy of the things of God among men.

If I have been compelled to take a prominent and offensive part, it has been to my sorrow, and not to my satisfaction at all. So little has it been a satisfaction, in the sense of your surmises, that at any time I have felt that the greatest kindness God could show to me would be to lay me where all his servants rest, while the present confusion reigns upon the earth.

This feeling grows stronger every year. I have been humbled by having it attributed to defective "vivativeness," as the phrenologists call it. The sympathetic critics who apply this salve can only interpret by their own feelings; but their interpretation is a mistake.

I tell them I am not behind them in the natural love of life; but there are considerations that counterbalance instinctive feeling, and lead a man to say with Job, "I would not live alway." Life is not desirable in the present state of things upon earth, in which there is an absence of every condition that the love of God and the love of man would prompt a man to desire to see; and in which every human arm is utterly powerless to alter the situation. Some good friends cannot understand the sentiment: we can only have patience, and say, "What ye know not now, ye may know hereafter."

I desire to justify you to the utmost that justice admits. But after all allowances and concessions, let me reason with you against the unreasonableness of your attitude. Perhaps you are not all inaccessible to reason, though some of you are. What is there in the substantial shape of my life for 30 years past that warrants the hotness of your displeasure? Have I not laboured above all things to make the Bible influential? Have I not sought to defend it from the attacks of all kinds of assailants? Have I not steadily tried to induce people to become daily readers of it? Have I not striven to make its glorious doctrines manifest, and its excellent commandments observed?

Do you think I have done this with too much fervour? Do you really think I have been too "extreme"? Consider the situation among men, and say how, in the midst of so much inertia, any successful work is to be done for God without a degree of enthusiasm that in some relations may be inconvenient? Say where any divine work has ever been done in this stagnant world of human indifference without zeal? Is it not the fact that we have too little and not too much zeal? Is it not true that the word

of God throughout, has everything to say in favour of zeal, and nothing but words of disparagement for those who are lukewarm in the supremest concern of human life?

And now, if my whole work, and my whole influence have been promotive of the truth in public and in private, in theory and in practice, ought you not to be merciful to what you may consider my infirmities? Ought you not to help in any way in your power, instead of trying to weaken and hinder by unfriendly words and deeds?

Those who are of the truth, rejoice in the truth's service by whatsoever means promoted; and such will always have a very broad mantle of charity ready for the imperfections that are more or less incident to all human ways in the present state. They do not give the exclusive benefit of this mantle to the faults of those who oppose the truth: surely they have a little corner of it to spare sometimes for those who love the Lord with all their heart, and offend only by their earnest contention for the faith once delivered to the saints against every form of corruption.

LET TRUTH BE THE GUIDING INFLUENCE

It is an everlasting and a universal rule that those who are of the truth hear the truth's voice and are on the truth's side, and rejoice in the truth's prosperity. The truth has been a dividing thing from the beginning; it draws strongly to itself those who are of it, and it repels decisively those who "savour not the things that be of God but those which be of men."

The one class has always been very small and the other always very large. You remember in which of the two companies the Lord Jesus was found. You remember that he was regarded with extreme displeasure by multitudes of the Jewish people who had reason for regarding themselves as the Lord's people. Possibly you may reconsider. Possibly you may try to think that I may be on the Lord's side; and that if so, our averted looks and bitter words will not be to your satisfaction in the day of the Lord.

I have no doubt you feel entirely justified in your attitude by the bad things reported to you. But as to this, I would say, have you done me justice in the matter? "Doth our law condemn a man before it hear him?" Do we not give him the opportunity of answering or explaining what is alleged against him? Experience constantly shows the need for this. You must know human life and human nature enough to know how easily many things are said in private

talk that are not true, and yet that are perhaps not said with the design of untruth. You cannot, of course, shut your eyes to all you hear; but you can resolve to be uninfluenced by it until you have given the person affected the private opportunity of explanation (if the matter is serious enough to call for it). You will always be able to judge by the way the opportunity is used as to how the matter stands. A guilty man will not be anxious to have such an opportunity; and will shuffle if it is given him. A righteous man will be anxious to court the fullest enquiry, and to afford the fullest explanation.

You think unfavourably of my course towards our two ex-"rev." brethren.* It is not in my heart to blame you much for this. I realise that you could not well think otherwise in the limited knowledge of all the circumstances possible to you. I trust to the effects of time and reflection to soften your feelings somewhat on this head. When you have finally put all things together, perhaps a little pity may take the place of censure. You will not, of course, condemn the first part of my course towards them. I took them in when they were in extreme need, and because they were in extreme need; and in Bro. Ashcroft's case, because I thought the truth would everywhere be benefited by what he would be at liberty in a free position to do on its behalf. At the same time, I thought it would save him from the danger of being manipulated by those who might wish to use him to the detriment of apostolic principles in the house of Christ. I undertook more than the upshot showed I was able to do. I felt that in the special circumstances of both cases, duty left me no escape in assuming another burden if I was able to bear it, which I hoped and believed I should be able to do. The burden thus undertaken I did not throw up, and would not have thrown up of my own accord, except in Brother Chamberlin's case.

It is the second part of my course that you blame. You blame me for breaking with them. All I have to say is, that I had no choice. This has been a pure misfortune and an unmix'd grief, the bitterness of which was aggravated by the certainty that it would lead to what I have experienced. But I could not hesitate. The "thin end of the wedge" is

* Two ex-clergymen, who had been converted to the Truth (one of whom had been employed in the Christadelphian Office as an act of friendship by Brother Roberts) took the foremost part in the ensuing controversy to the extreme grief of mind of Brother Roberts.

proverbially the thing to be resisted. They promulgated principles with respect to the character of the Scriptures of truth that logically took away the basis of our co-operation. I cannot help thinking that if you realised this clearly that is (presuming you sympathise more with God than with men), you would sympathise as much with the second part of my course as you did with the first.

The judgment seat will presently settle the matter. In this direction I have no misgiving as regards this particular case. I do not presume to anticipate the verdict of the august tribunal; but there is such a thing as the answer of a good conscience. The Gentile maxim that "conscience makes cowards of us all" does not apply to those who labour, with Paul, to have "a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man." It applies only to those whose actions and speeches are dictated by a sense of present advantage irrespective of the revealed will of God.

I am not sanguine of any good in thus appealing to you. It may not be without effect as regards some. As regards others, we must recognise that they belong to "the children in the market-place," to whom it is all one what is said or done: they are bound to be displeased. Jesus came under their censure because he ate and drank; John the Baptist, because he did not. To such, the object of their aversion cannot do right. If he is silent, he cannot answer; if he speaks, he is boastful. If he takes no notice of accusation, it is because he dare not. If he answer, it is because he has a presumptuous and egotistical spirit.

PERSONAL FEELINGS AND DESIRES

I have nothing but good wishes for the unhappy subjects of such perverseness of spirit; but it is impossible to take them into account in a practical way. They must be quietly and good naturedly left alone, in the hope that they will be no more likely to come to reason in that way than by any other line of treatment.

I would say, in conclusion, there are many reasons for mutual compassion and forbearance, if we could but fully open our mind to their power. We are permitted to breathe God's beautiful air together for only a short time. It is not long since we stepped out of the oblivion of the measureless past: we are busy performing the various movements belonging to our allotted perishable days. And it will not be long, in the order of nature, before we shall cease all

our activities and disappear from the scene as entirely as the froth-bubble that bursts on the water.

The earth we inhabit with such splendid capabilities of well-being, is full of human misery. Our days are few and evil. Why should we add to the inevitable affliction that is wearing us away? Wherein we are powerless to abstain (as when Christ caused hatred by telling the world its works were evil)—we must needs be resigned: but let us be sure that, in some courses, we may not be “kicking against the pricks.”

Furthermore, we are on the verge of great events, in the presence of which all our grievances and misunderstandings will sink to utter insignificance, and the minds of men be made to fear a fear that will drive away many of their present views and impressions.

The judgment of God upon the Gentiles is about in a few years, to come forth with Christ, whose arrival upon the scene is dispensationally due. The thunder of his manifested power will silence all bicker and extinguish all animosity, and confound all sympathies of all merely human origin. If we are in harmony with divine ways and thoughts, we will be safe in the terrible convulsion that will destroy Gentile wickedness and lay Gentile power in the dust in all the earth.

“The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.” I sincerely say that there will be no greater pleasure for me in that day, if happily I am myself accepted, than to see you all acquitted and owned of God. Your enmity will in that case be changed to friendship and love, and we shall rejoice together in eternal peace. That this may be our portion I pray, and subscribe myself,

Your sincere friend and well-wisher, who never grieves so much as when compelled to appear in the attitude of apparent unfriendliness.

Robert Roberts.

May, 1885.

Comfort in Controversy

The record of Ecclesial life seems to be one of constant controversy. This is extremely distressing to those who have the welfare of their brethren and the Truth at heart, and often causes misgivings as to what is the cause of this. Have we really the Truth?

To this there can be but one reply: Yes! without the shadow of a doubt! A careful review of the Spiritual evidence upon which we base our faith will reveal that. Why, then, is there so much controversy? Because of the difficulty of mixing the divine with the human; because though we hold the Truth which is from above, we are human, and therefore prone to evil "as the sparks that fly upwards."

It would not be difficult to achieve peace if we were prepared to capitulate on principle; but where the Truth is loved more than self, it seems inevitably to result in dissension. This, however, does not mean that we are necessarily lacking in the Truth, nor the spirit of it. Consider Paul's experience with the brethren in Corinth. Despite the extent of love that he manifested to them, and he claimed to have a greater regard for them than for others (2 Cor. 12:15; 2:3-4), his relationships with them were strained to the uttermost through controversy over doctrine, conduct, and personalities. From this we can take heart; for if an inspired Apostle experienced such a state, with the authority and wisdom he was able to bring to bear upon the problems that faced him, how much more are we likely to do so.

Consider the charges laid against Paul as outlined in 2 Corinthians.

A Judaising group had arrived at the Ecclesia, arrogantly claiming authority, and swaying many of the brethren against the Apostle (2 Cor. 11:4,13), seeking to undermine his personal character. His change of plan (see 1 Cor. 16: 5-7) had been decried as evidence of unreliability (2 Cor. 1:17-18) or of cowardice (2 Cor. 1:23), whereas, the fact of the matter was that he had their concern at heart (2 Cor. 2:1-3). They claimed that he corrupted the Word (2 Cor. 2:17), and because he lacked letters of commendation, that he had not the support of those in Ecclesial authority (2 Cor. 3:1-4). They accused Paul of dishonesty (2 Cor. 4:2; 7:2; 8:20-21), and descending to personalities, mocked at his personal appearance and lack of oratory, accusing him

of being a paper-soldier — powerful in letter, but cowardly in personal discussion (2 Cor. 10:9-10; 11:6). They cast doubts upon his Apostolic authority (Ch. 10:8; 11:5), and claimed that he abstained from any appeal to maintenance (Ch. 11:7) because he realised that he was not worth any; and then, swinging to an extreme, they accused him of dishonesty in taking up a collection for the poor (Ch. 12:17).

These, and other, charges were rebutted in a letter that expresses the warm comfort of the Apostle to those who had heeded his previous letter, and warning to those who were resisting his Apostolic authority. In this letter (2 Corinthians), the word "comfort" occurs some 14 times. He reveals the source of comfort (Ch. 1:3; 7:6), the purpose of comfort (Ch. 1:4; 7:13), the compensations of comfort (Ch. 1:5-6), the duty to comfort others (Ch. 2:7), the need to derive comfort in tribulation (Ch. 7:4), the value of recognising the comforting hand of God in natural things (Ch. 7:6), the command to seek divine comfort (Ch. 13:11).

Side by side with the Apostle's use of the word "comfort" is his constant use of the word "boasting" or "glorying" as it is rendered in the Revised Version. The attacks of his adversaries demanded that he vindicate himself, though he would prefer not to do so. The scandals urged against Paul would have been hard to endure at any time. They were so especially at a time when the Apostle was suffering overwhelming distress with consequent mental and physical prostration (Ch. 7:5). It became a duty and a necessity, however distasteful, to defend himself. Personally he neither required nor cared for any self-defence. But before God in Christ, he felt bound to clear his character from these detestable innuendos, because they were liable, if unchecked, to hinder his work both in Corinth and elsewhere; and his work had on him a sacred claim. Hence, though nothing was more repellent to his sensitive humility than any semblance of egotism or boasting, he is driven by the unscrupulousity of his opponents to adopt such a tone of self-defence that the word "boasting" occurs no less than 29 times. He neither could nor would appeal to any letters of commendation or to any certificate from his brother apostles, because he had received his own apostolate direct from God; and hence he was forced to appeal, on the one hand to his visions and revelations, and on the other hand to the seal of approval which, in every way, God had set

to his unparalleled activity and devotion.

Paul does not hesitate to plainly reveal his opponents for what they really were. They were not too dignified to take all the material benefit they could extract (Ch. 11:20). They might claim to be ministers of Christ, but were they prepared to suffer for him (Ch. 11:22-23)? They spoke of visions and revelations, but what if Paul had revealed what he had been granted in that way (Ch. 12:1-7)? The greatest challenge, however, was not that of personalities, but the propagation of false teaching (Ch. 11:4).

Yet out of those distressing circumstances was penned an epistle that reveals to us an insight of Paul that acts as a compelling exhortation and warm encouragement in times of trouble and persecution. It is not only a letter of personal vindication, but one of comfort to the faithful of every age, and a warning to those affected by errorists.

The Epistle shows the value of wise and faithful counsellors. When Paul was in the midst of Corinth, guiding affairs, and setting an example, the Ecclesia flourished, and was an influence for good in the brotherhood, but when he left, and his place was filled by unworthy men — worldly-minded brethren, tinged with pagan theology and human philosophy — the Ecclesia fell at once into a state of apostasy. In less than six years from the date of the apostle's departure this Ecclesia had become, in miniature, like modern Christendom — split up into factions, loose in morals and astray in doctrine. This seems incredible, but it is true. "Ye are yet carnal," "Ye are puffed up," "I speak to your shame," "I praise you not," "Awake to righteousness and sin not," are among the things penned in sadness by Paul to the members of the once thriving and useful meeting. Let all this be a lesson to us. Let us be very careful in our selection of brethren to whom we look for advice and exhortation. Let judgment and not mere feeling move us. Let not the fear of giving offence, or any unworthy consideration, deter us from doing our duty. Let the principles that govern our choice be not the mere admiration of fluency of speech, attractiveness of person, or genial manners, but those set forth in Titus 1:7-9. If the Truth is to prosper we must see that our exemplars are well-grounded in the Scriptures, and irreproachable in character—men who not only know the way of the Lord, but who themselves walk in it.

H.P.M.

*Lives of great men oft remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of Time;
Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, may take heart again.
Let us, then, be up and doing,
With our heart and with our mind,
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Reaping the reward in time.*

— Amended.