

Signs

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Indicating the near return of Our LORD.

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“Exposition of the Revelation.”

“At hand ; or, Things which must shortly come
to pass.”

“Bible Words and Biblical Notes,” etc.

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BEFORE the first Coming of our Lord there were signs of an astronomical character indicating to the sages of the East the immediate advent of a mighty Conqueror—One who would smash to atoms the throne of the Cæsars’ and establish on its ruins a universal, a strong and enduring monarchy. Jerusalem was regarded as the capital seat of Empire. The heathen literature of that day amply confirms our statement. The Eastern world was on the tip-toe of expectation. They were not disappointed, for He came, but they were greatly disappointed at the place and manner of His Coming.

It would have been a marvel of lowness, a wonderful stoop, if He Who sat on the throne of the universe, dwelling in a palace of surpassing glory, whose ministering servants were cherubim, seraphim, archangel, angels, and the highest created intelligences, had He deigned to occupy the most magnificent palace designed by man. But *no*, He passed by the royal residence of king, and the princely mansion of the noble, and was first witnessed in a *stable* by a few humble shepherds. Such was the strange,

mysterious advent of the Lord into His own creation. How contrary to all human thought!

Once again there are signs, not astronomical, for the Eastern mind, not of a scientific character for the materialistic mind of the West. But moral signs which all can understand.

SIGNS EASILY READ.

The whole world is stirred. The Christian profession in continent, in country, in city, in town, and village has been roused by the midnight cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom!" The wise virgins—the whole company of the saved on earth—are going out with trimmed lamp to meet the Coming Bridegroom, to resume the ancient position and attitude of the Church which characterised its life for three hundred years. It was Constantine, the first Christian (?) emperor, who in the fourth century by his blandishments lulled the Church to sleep, out of which she has now been roused.

Palestine, just wrested from the brutal grasp of the Turk, has stirred the heart and memory of the Jewish nation, now numbering, it is believed, nearly twenty millions of people. For many centuries the Jews have been wanderers on the face of the earth. They have wept, prayed, and suffered. A distinct people, with national aspirations soon to be realised. Jewish hope is centred in Palestine—50,000 are returning yearly. The advent of the Messiah to sit on the throne of David, complete independence from Gentile domination, Palestine once again the home and country of her people, and Jerusalem the Metropolis of the world, constitute in brief the sum of Jewish hope and expectation.

THE MOHAMMEDAN WORLD

has been praying of late years with an intensity never before felt that their great prophet might come and bring in their sensuous paradise of bliss, and curse and exterminate the renegade part of the race who refuse their blasphemous teachings and practices. Hope is the predominating power in the heart of the Christian, the Jew, and the Mohammedan,

THE GROANING CREATION

utters its wail in the minor key, and groans on in hope of a speedy relief from suffering. Its agony is increasing as increasing sin is developed on its surface. The heart of the world is nigh broken. Sinning and groaning are twin companions. How creation knows and feels that her deliverance is at hand we cannot tell, but it groans in hope (Rom. 8. 20, 21).

There is agony in the heights,

There is agony in the depths,

There is agony everywhere.

*“ He'll bid the whole creation smile,
And hush its groan.”*

The Lord is *at hand*. There is no hope for the distracted Church nor a shipwrecked world save in the presence and power of Christ. The world is beginning to realise as it never did before, the utter failure of Socialism, of diplomacy, of education, to stem the torrent of lawlessness and bring in a millennium of rest and peace to the weary world. The hope of the world lies in the advent of Christ. When the government is transferred from King, President, Ruler, and Parliament to Him Who sustains and governs the universe, but not till then, will the world rest from sin and sorrow and be bathed in the sunshine of His glory for a thousand years.

There are five prominent signs indicating the near return of our Lord.

I.—THE CHURCH SIGN.

In chapters 2 and 3 of the Revelation we have seven successive stages of Church history from the decay of first love in Ephesus till utter and loathsome rejection in Laodicea. The history is from bad to worse. Now what succeeds Laodicea is the harlot—a system which calls down the utmost vengeance of an angry God. Where are we to-day? In Laodicean times. We have entered upon the seventh and closing stage of Church history. We are perilously near the climax. The Church's departure from holiness and truth is advancing by leaps and bounds. The chasm is widening. We are on the eve of the Apostasy of Christendom.

What are the simple facts accessible to all? We fearlessly assert that every distinctive truth of Christianity is now openly and unblushingly denied, and often made the subject of scoff and foul jest. The Virgin birth of our Lord, the Deity of Christ, His Substitutionary Sacrifice, Eternal Punishment, the Atonement, and every vital truth is being contemptuously rejected; whilst the Bible is now regarded by the mass as having served its day. Its value is now at a discount. Books and parts of books are denied as possessing any real or divine authority.

What is the consequence of this negation of God's Word and of vital truth?

LAWLESSNESS—PURE AND SIMPLE.

Where moral obligation to God is either weakened or practically given up, then it naturally follows that parental bonds and magisterial authority go by the board. Those two evils are greatly on the increase. No God and no Bible is the climax of departure from truth and the height of human folly. God is the great fact of the universe, and the uniting bond of all true and stable government. The "down-grade" movement cannot be arrested save by Judgment. The consummation is the dethronement of God from the conscience and the exaltation of man. A man, probably now alive, will usurp God's place in the temple (2 Thess. 2. 4); and a man, probably now alive, will be worshipped as God on earth (Rev. 13. 12). The Church sign points in unmistakable terms to the certain and near return of our blessed Lord.

II.—THE JEWISH SIGN.

The only miracle wrought by our Lord of a judicial kind was the cursing of the fig-tree (Matt. 21. 19). Now the fig-tree figures Israel as a nation (Hosea 9. 10; Luke 13. 6-9). There were leaves in abundance on the fig-tree, but no fruit. Plenty of profession. So the curse upon the fig-tree has lasted nigh two thousand years.

But a new fig-tree, a new generation, is to rise. Thus in Matthew 24. 32 the new fig-tree is putting on

leaves and branches, the marked sign that God is about to intervene on behalf of His Ancient People.

Now look at the Jewish position to-day. Great Britain has driven the Turk out of Palestine, and is at present exercising a protectorate over the country. What will she do with Palestine? No European Power desires to annex the Holy Land. The attempt to do so would create a European situation of the gravest danger. For nigh two thousand years the Jews have been wanderers on the face of the earth, and yet through centuries of change, of oppression, of attempted extermination, they have maintained their national characteristics—in physiognomy, in faith, and character. A Jew is a Jew all the world over. They are a distinct people, and Palestine is their natural home. The land belongs to Jehovah (Lev. 25. 23) and the Jew is His tenant. There is the country, and *here* is the people.

THE SOLUTION OF THE JEWISH PROBLEM

is simple. Settle the Jewish people in their own land. This is the avowed policy of Great Britain. The Turk regards Jerusalem as sacred, and second in veneration to Mecca. But his day and reign are over. It will be the sentiment of a united Europe; send the Jews back to their own land; they alone have right to it. Establish a Hebrew Commonwealth in Palestine.

Prophecy circles round the Jew and Jerusalem. Prophecy opens with the Jew in the land. The Jewish question will soon force itself upon the attention of Europe. The national restoration of Judah by (we gather) Great Britain will be a matter of world-wide interest (Isa. 18. 3).

One question remains. Prophecy starts with a seven years' league or treaty made by the Roman prince with the apostate nation then in the land (Dan. 9. 27). Previous to the covenant we—the saints of Old and New Testament times—have been translated to meet the Lord. The Jewish sign calls aloud, *He is just at hand!*

III.—THE INDUSTRIAL OR SOCIAL SIGN.

Revelation 13. 16, 17. Combination is the order of the day. Union is strength. The individual counts for nothing. Individual responsibility to God in Church and social life is almost a forgotten truth. The purport of "Unions" and "Combinations" is to seek the general good. A man is not allowed to sell his labour as he thinks fit. His "Union" won't allow it. One dead level is insisted upon. He must move in the mass. The tendency of this interference with individual right and freedom is to create a level of mediocrity. Trade Unionism is a menace to the country, and numbers of Christian men are groaning under a tyranny which they are powerless to resist. Trade Unions are on a more gigantic scale than ever. There is a strong effort being made to federate all the trades in the world into one vast combine. But they have not the man to head the movement, to consolidate, to unify the numerous conflicting interests involved. It will need

A SUPER-HUMAN MASTER MIND

to bring about such a project.

But God providentially is preparing the peoples for it, and hence when after the removal of the saints (1 Thess. 4. 16, 17) Satan will bring forward *his* man, whom probably he is *now* preparing in secret. The head of the world-wide movement is the personally and satanically inspired Antichrist. Into this "Union" high and low, rich and poor, are forced under pain of death by *starvation*. No one will be allowed to *sell* a loaf of bread nor *buy* a loaf of bread unless the man belongs to the political union headed up under the Beast. Individual liberty is crushed out. Christendom, more or less, is witnessed in the vilest subjection at the feet of a man—arrogant, murderous, blasphemous, cruel. Just see how the political union is supported by the social confederation. The Beast heads the former. The Antichrist controls the other (Rev. xiii. 15-17).

"Unions" and "strikes" all the world over! What an object lesson! How rapid the preparation for the

one vast union which will embrace all the federations of Europe, and which the Lord Himself will crush and grind to powder at His Coming in power. Separate from these unholy combinations on which the utmost vengeance of God will fall! How significant the sign!

IV.—THE POLITICAL SIGN.

The rearrangement of Europe and grouping of Powers is a necessary step in the development of the prophetic situation. The various actors, as the Beast, the Antichrist, the Kings of the North and South, the Kings of the East, the Kings of the Earth, Gog, etc., have each their respective spheres of operation assigned them. Prophecy presents a complete and perfect system.

It is proposed to form a League of Nations so as to ensure the peace of the world for generations to come. It is Jehovah, and not a concert of nations, Who will cause wars to cease. It is proposed to set up an international tribunal to settle disputes amongst the nations. "The Palace of Peace" at the Hague has proved a signal failure. The League now proposed is forming the public mind for the prophetic formation of the long defunct fourth Empire. Its territorial extent consists of ten kingdoms, and into this Germany has no place. There is considerable discussion as to *when* Germany, the bitter foe of France, will be admitted into the League of Nations. That may or may not take place. But into the Prophetic League she does not enter. Her place and alliance is with Gog, or Russia, and she becomes prominent at the close of Daniel's prophetic week of seven years (Ezek. 38. 6). Gomer is the ancient name of Germany. Germany will never resume the place in Europe that she formerly occupied.

UNION IS THE CRY

in ecclesiastical circles, in the industrial world, and in the political sphere. Peace is on the lip, war in the heart. The love of conquest, greed of territory, and selfishness on every hand are characteristic features of

national life everywhere. The nations are trembling. The world is restless. All are fearing the great consummation. The crash is sure to come. We are on the eve of a universal time of trouble for Christendom, for the Jew, and for the world at large. Things will get worse before the Lord establishes His kingdom. He alone can give rest to the weary and restless world. The political sign says the warrior-king and Prince of Peace is at hand. First, there will be a prophetically decreed war, then peace for a thousand years.

V.—THE CHRONOLOGICAL SIGN.

(Luke 12. 38). The Romans divided the night into four watches : (1) from 6 to 9 ; (2) from 9 to 12 ; (3) from 12 to 3 ; (4) from 3 to 6. That bit of Gentile chronology is adopted in the New Testament, and forms the basis of the lengthened chronology of a moral kind and character.

The fourth watch closes the long dark night for Israel ; hence that is vividly set before us in Matthew 14. 25. In the moment of utmost distress the blessed Lord suddenly appeared on their behalf and calmed the storm. But for us

HE COMES IN THE THIRD WATCH.

When does it open? At midnight. The midnight cry has gone forth, "Behold, the Bridegroom!" But mark the accuracy of Scripture, "*at* midnight." Then He comes *in* the third watch, which is now running its course. He may be here at any moment. The *third* watch opens with the midnight cry and closes with the translation ; then the fourth watch opens and closes with the deliverance of Israel. The third watch is about to close. Our triumph shout is just about to break upon a sleeping Church and a restless world. May God keep our hearts bright for Christ, our lights trimmed and burning, while we wait for the fulfilment of the grandest event of centuries—THE IMMEDIATE RETURN OF THE LORD HIMSELF!

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