

***FRIENDLY TALKS ON VITAL TOPICS***

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# FRIENDLY TALKS ON VITAL TOPICS

## PREFACE.

The conversational Bible Study which is contained in the following pages was originally run through the columns of *The Bible and Our Times*. When it ended, a general demand was received for its publication in a form convenient for preservation and wider distribution, and this book is the result. The matter has been revised and enlarged before being reprinted in its present form.

“Friendly Talks” deals largely with two vital topics, the Second Advent of the Lord, and the Great Reformation, outlined in the Scriptures, which must take place before Christ’s people can be ready to hail His glorious appearing with joy. In the following pages these subjects are discussed as fully as space will allow, and many difficult questions which ordinarily arise in the mind of the inquirer are dealt with. The object has been to treat these questions candidly and thoroughly, so far as possible in the words of the inspired writers. It is hoped that many who would not at first appreciate a book written in the ordinary style upon these important subjects, may become interested in their study through reading the conversations contained in this little volume.

Some may conclude from the style of “Friendly Talks,” that it is, to some extent, a work of the imagination. This is not so. Every question raised in it, and every incident mentioned, is taken from real life. The reformation referred to in the closing chapters is going on today in the lives of thousands, who are learning by actual experience that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is still the living God in the twentieth century, and that it is no less blessed today than it ever was to put implicit confidence in His Holy Word.

With the prayer that many of its readers may learn this same lesson, and may steadfastly endure the trying of their faith, “Friendly Talks” is commended to the earnest and prayerful consideration of those into whose hands it may fall.

**THE PUBLISHERS.**

## FRIENDLY TALKS ON VITAL TOPICS

### WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

“Well, what difference does it all make? That is what I want to know,” said Mr. Rogers, with an air that seemed to say, answer that if you can.

He and his friend John Barker were on their way home from work at the close of the day, and had just been discussing whether or not they should accept an invitation given to them by a neighbour. Mr. Summers, the neighbour in question, had caused some little stir in the town in which they lived by advocating certain new ideas. Through reading some literature which had fallen into his hands, he had been led to the conclusion that the second coming of the Saviour must be very near at hand, and that it was the duty of Christians to hold themselves in readiness for that event, not only by personal obedience to the will of God in all respects, but also by proclaiming to others the glad tidings of the approaching kingdom, and stirring them up, whether professing Christians or not, to prepare to meet the Lord. Mr. Summers had been acting on these convictions by inviting his neighbours to call on him for mutual study of the topic, but so far the neighbours had seemed rather shy of going into the matter. Many when pressed by Mr. Summers to call at his home and read over with him what the Bible had to say on the subject, began to make excuses.

Fred Rogers and John Barker had both received a cordial invitation of this kind from Mr. Summers, and were now debating whether or not they should accept it. The two had been Christians for some years, and were close friends. They were naturally interested in learning all they could about the contents and meaning of the Bible, and felt disposed to accept the invitation of Mr. Summers, although both were a little fearful lest they should be drawn into the acceptance of new and erroneous doctrine. John Barker was perhaps the more careful thinker of the two, although both were intelligent and fond of reading. But now, having introduced the two men, and disclosed the subject of their conversation, we will let him answer his friend's question, with which this chapter opens.

“I must say it seems to me to make a good deal of difference. Mr. Summers is greatly changed, that is certain, and most of us would be, I expect, if we began to look at things as he does.”

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“Yes, perhaps so,” replied Fred Rogers, “but what I meant was, I don’t believe it matters whether we are so very particular. You don’t think God will condemn us, do you, just because we haven’t been quite as thorough-going and out-and-out Christians as we might have been?”

“I don’t know,” said John Barker, seriously. “I was only thinking yesterday, while the minister was reading about Lot’s wife, that the Lord seemed rather particular about being obeyed exactly. He was doing all He could to save her and her family from being burned up in the wicked city, and the angels fairly dragged them out of Sodom, as though God was determined not to let them perish; but after all, when she disobeyed the strict command not to look behind her, she became a pillar of salt. And I can’t help remembering that the Lord Himself said to us: ‘Remember Lot’s wife.’ When I remember her, it seems to me that it doesn’t do to trifle with anything God says.”

“Ah, but that was a matter of life and death. You can’t take that as a fair illustration. Doesn’t it say somewhere that if God were to mark offences nobody would stand? So He can’t be very strict.”

“Not so fast, Fred. Remember that sickness and death, and all the misery that goes along with it, came into this world from one little sin, and God was not slow to mark that sin. Why, my dear fellow, if you had been in Adam’s place, you would have gone wrong at once with your reasoning. Because it was a little thing that God asked of you, just to leave one tree alone, you would have been saying to yourself: ‘Such a little thing can’t really matter; God never would be so strict as all that.’ Perhaps Adam and Eve talked to each other in that style; but if they did, God very soon gave them to understand that He meant what He said, big or little. It cannot mean that God will overlook disobedience in little things, when it says He does not mark offences, or else He would have overlooked Adam’s first offence. It must mean that there is forgiveness to be had through His grace for every sin, great and small.”

“Maybe you are right,” replied Mr. Rogers. “Still it seems to me that as long as a man is sincere in what he does, he will be accepted by God.”

“Yes, I think you are right there, because if he is sincere he won’t neglect any duty that God reveals to him. God won’t ask any more of us, I am sure, than that we serve Him sincerely,” replied Mr. Barker.

“What I meant to say was that it doesn’t matter whether a man goes one way or another, so long as he is sincere. For instance, Mr.

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Summers thinks certain things are right; and I may not agree with him; but if we are both sincere, it will make no difference. We shall both be all right in the end."

"Isn't that another question altogether Fred?" said Mr. Barker, with a smile. "You must have forgotten the inquest on old Mr. Johnston last winter. When his wife gave him the medicine out of the wrong bottle she did it in all sincerity, but he died just the same. I remember going out of my way once a good many miles because I was so sure that I was on the right road that I didn't dream of asking anyone I met to direct me. My sincerity didn't save me from going wrong; and if I hadn't got uneasy and begun to inquire, I never should have got to the place I was bound for. No; sincerity is very good, but it doesn't take the place of correct information; and the more I think about it, the more I think I shall go and hear what Mr. Summers has to say. If he has got any new light from the Bible, I would like to have some of it for myself. Light never hurt anybody yet, and if we study in the right spirit, God will save us from falling into error, for the Saviour promised that the Holy Spirit should lead us into all truth."

"Well, I'll come along with you. There are one or two questions I should rather like to ask Mr. Summers. But I must say I can't see how it is going to make any difference to us, as Christians, whether we believe that Jesus is coming again soon or not."

"I don't see myself," were Mr. Barker's parting words, as he lifted the latch of his garden gate; "but whatever truth you and I have learned in the past we have always found to be a blessing and a power in our lives, and if the Lord has more light for us, we may be quite sure that it will bring some blessing with it."

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### THE HOPE OF THE FATHERS

“You want to know what difference it makes?” said Mr. Summers.

“Yes,” replied Mr. Rogers; “Mr. Barker and I have been talking over things a little since you invited us to come and have a Bible study together. We can see some reasons why, perhaps, people ought to be giving more thought than they do to such matters, but we thought we would like you to tell us, before we go into the question more deeply, why you think it matters whether we believe that the Lord is soon coming again or not.”

The three men were seated in Mr. Summers' home. Each had a Bible before him, and a concordance, with one or two other books, laying on the table. Mr. Summers was a young man, about the same age as Fred Rogers. He had always been fond of study, and these tastes had been considerably strengthened by the new interest he had taken in the teachings of the Bible during the past year. He thought a moment before he answered the question put by Mr. Rogers, and then spoke:

“Matters to whom? To you, or to the Lord Jesus?”

“Why, of course, we were thinking of ourselves,” replied Mr. Rogers. “How can anyone know what it matters to the Saviour?”

“It matters everything to Him,” was the reply. “The very last message that has come to us from His own lips is: ‘Surely I come quickly.’ You will find it in the close of the Revelation, at the end of the Bible, like a parting word to keep us from ever forgetting that Jesus is coming again as quickly as possible. You know how we all treasure the last word spoken by a departed friend. Well, it seems to me that the Saviour wanted us to have some word that would always stay in our hearts, and keep alive in them the sweet remembrance of the past, and the blessed hope of the future, and He couldn't find a better message than this: ‘Surely I come quickly.’ And what makes me sure that this was His real thought in giving us that last loving message is the fact that when He parted with His disciples before the crucifixion, and when He left them to ascend to the right hand of the Father, it was the same word of consolation that He spoke to them then.”

“Where do you find that He spoke to His disciples just before the crucifixion about His coming back?” asked Mr. Barker.

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“In Matthew’s gospel,” was the answer, “the twenty-sixth chapter. When the Saviour instituted His memorial supper, He told the disciples that His body was to be broken and His blood was to be shed for them; but He did not leave them to think only of the cross. He pointed them forward to the time when He would come again to receive them into His kingdom. Read these words: ‘But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.’ Did you ever think of that when you were partaking of the Holy Communion? When we go to the Lord’s table, we are not only to look back; we are to look forward, also, to the coming great celebration of the Lord’s Supper, when He will drink wine with us in the kingdom. Our visits to the Lord’s Table ought to be like links in a chain that connect us, at one end, with the Supper at which the suffering Saviour was present, and, at the other, with the great feast in the kingdom, when He will once more pass to us the bread and the wine. Paul saw this in the Supper, for he writes to the Corinthian believers: ‘As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death *till He come!*’ So you see the Holy Communion is robbed of its wonderful meaning if it does not lead us to cherish the thought of the Saviour’s return.”

“I must confess,” said Mr. Barker, “that I hadn’t seen the Lord’s Supper in this light. It certainly gives it new meaning.”

“Yes, and that is not all,” replied Mr. Summers. “Notice what the Saviour says: ‘I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you.’ He seems to say, When you meet to celebrate the Supper, think of Me, not as enjoying the plenty of heaven, but as filled with a great longing to sit down with you all. So the Lord’s Supper, every time we partake of it, ought to remind us that the Saviour’s heart is yearning for the time when all the saved will sit at His table. How it must gladden His heart to see the longed-for moment drawing nearer! When I think of Christ, and His earnest desire for the reunion with his own, I can’t help feeling that we ought to be thinking more of the difference it makes to Him than about the difference it makes to us, whether His longing is soon to be gratified or not.”

“That’s true,” said Mr. Rogers; “I am afraid I haven’t been taking the feelings of the Saviour into account when I have thought about His second coming. But you were going to tell us about the Saviour’s last message, when He ascended.”

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“You will find it in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles,” answered Mr. Summers. “Jesus had taken the disciples out to Olivet, and had there ascended before them, until a cloud received Him from their sight. Then, while they stood with upturned faces, looking and looking, as though they never could take their eyes off the cloud that hid His beloved form, lo, two angels stood by them with a word of comfort for their bereaved hearts: ‘This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.’”

“So you see, when Jesus goes forth to be crucified, He points His sorrowing disciples to the time when they should sit down with Him in His kingdom; when He ascends into heaven, He comforts those who lose His personal presence with the assurance that He, the same Jesus, will one day descend; and the last word that comes to us from His own lips repeats the same glad tidings: ‘Surely I come quickly.’ Clearly, it ought to make to us who love Him all the difference in the world whether the glad tidings is soon to be fulfilled. More than that, the promise of the return of Jesus is so prominent in the Scriptures, and is connected with so many other great truths, that if we do not give the ‘blessed hope,’ as Paul calls it, its proper place, we are certain to go astray in our understanding of other teachings of the Bible.”

“It certainly does seem,” said Mr. Rogers, “that the subject is very important, and I, for one, am getting anxious to know more about it.”

“It is a remarkable fact, said Mr. Summers, “that while in our day the second coming of the Saviour has no interest for large numbers of Christians, thousands of years ago it was a highly-prized hope. Naturally, one would think that the nearer we come to the end, the more the church would be looking for the second advent, but it almost seems as if the patriarchs and prophets made more of it than the church does today.”

“You say ‘thousands of years’; how far back do you find the coming of the Lord spoken of?” asked Mr. Barker.

“Well, it certainly was referred to in the garden of Eden,” was Mr. Summers’ reply. “The promise that the head of the serpent should be crushed by the Seed of the woman pointed forward to the time when sin and death should be vanquished and brought to an end. But the record of the years before the Flood is so exceedingly brief that we know next to nothing of the knowledge enjoyed by the servants of God in that time. If it were not for a brief allusion by a New Testament writer, we should not



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know that the hope of the coming of the Lord encouraged the hearts of the antediluvian saints when they saw themselves surrounded by the tides of evil.”

“Where in the New Testament do you find any such reference as that?” inquired Mr. Rogers.

“In the epistle of Jude,” was the reply. “He tells us that ‘Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.’ Enoch was a good man who walked with God, and God showed him the end of human rebellion. Enoch passed on the knowledge to his generation, and taught them about the time when the Lord should appear to execute judgment. And his message has come down even to our day to show how it has always been a star of hope to the people of God.”

“Do you suppose, Mr. Summers, that Abraham knew anything of the second advent?” questioned Mr. Barker.

“There is no definite statement that he did,” was the reply. “But we know that he saw the day of Christ, and was glad, for the Saviour Himself tells us so. And the eleventh chapter of Hebrews informs us that Abraham believed in the resurrection from the dead, and looked for his inheritance in the renewed earth, and in the city whose Builder and Maker is God. He and his seed ‘died in faith,’ so they must have looked forward to the coming of the Lord to bring them forth from the dust. The prophecy of Enoch shows that Abraham did not live too early to know anything of the second advent. Then Job, who probably lived not long after Abraham’s time, spoke very definitely about it. Will you read us Job 19:25-27, Mr. Rogers?”

Mr. Rogers found the place, and read: “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me,”

“Do you notice,” asked Mr. Summers, “how clearly Job states his hope? It is a Redeemer whom he expects to see, who at the latter day shall stand upon the earth. That Redeemer is divine, even the Son of God; and Job in

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that day will be clothed with renewed flesh, notwithstanding his body has been dissolved in decay. How closely does Job's hope correspond with that expressed by the apostle Paul! On another occasion the patriarch speaks of his own resurrection, and again his statements are in close harmony with Christ's own teaching. You will read them in Job 14:14, 15: 'If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call and I will answer Thee: Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thy hands.' The Psalmist David also speaks of the same time. Will you read to us from Psalm fifty, verses three to five, Mr. Barker?"

Mr. Barker read with a solemnity that deepened as he proceeded: "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people. Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." "It sounds very terrible," he remarked.

"It is," answered Mr. Summers. "Far more so than any of us can conceive. It will be an awful thing to be numbered among the wicked in that day. No wonder they pray that the rocks may fall on them and hide them from the face of the Lamb, because the great day of His wrath is come. But there is another side to the story. You remember the comfort that came into Job's heart when he looked forward to that day. When the Lord should come in power and glory, He would not be to His own as 'a stranger,' which is the marginal reading of Job 19:27. The devouring fire and the tumult of the tempest are not for the people of God. For them there is the loving summons: 'Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.' Christ and His people have become one, joined in one spirit of self-denying service. He is no stranger to them; and His love casts out all fear from their hearts. The coming of the Lord is for them the overflowing fullness of joy unspeakable and full of glory.

"Then again, if you will turn to the prophecy of Isaiah," continued Mr. Summers, "you will see that he also speaks of the coming of the Lord in glory as though it would be an event earnestly desired and expected by His people. The twenty-fifth chapter, verse nine, reads: 'And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.'" So you see that His own will be looking and waiting for Him."

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“But does not that prophecy refer to the first advent of the Lord?” asked Mr. Rogers. “It speaks about bringing salvation. Did not Jesus do that at His first coming?”

“Yes,” was the reply, “but His second coming will bring to perfection the salvation then begun. The epistle to the Hebrews tells us that to them that look for Him Jesus will appear the second time without sin unto salvation. And Peter tells that we ‘are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.’ When man sinned he lost character and life and home. The work of restoration began at Calvary; it will be completed when Jesus returns to take His people home, to dwell with Him forever. Isaiah, in the very passage we have just read from, shows the scope of the salvation which the Saviour brings at His second coming: ‘He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth.’ Even the redeemed still have to weep over the ravages of sin and death, but they will weep no more after the coming of the Lord.

“But now let us consider further what the second advent will bring. Mr. Barker, will you turn to the thirtieth chapter of Isaiah, and read what it says as to the effect of the Lord’s coming upon His enemies? Verse twenty-seven.”

Mr. Barker read: “Behold, the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with His anger, and the burden thereof is heavy: His lips are full of indignation, and His tongue as a devouring fire.”

“Now verse thirty, please.”

And the Lord shall cause His glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of His arm, with the indignation of His anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones.”

“Now will you read the twenty-ninth verse, which describes the attitude of God’s children at that very time? Here, as everywhere else, you will notice that it is an occasion of rejoicing.”

“Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one who goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the mighty One of Israel.”

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“Thank you,” said Mr. Summers. “We might read a great many scriptures, for the Bible has much to say on this subject. The prophets refer to it again and again. It is the blessed hope that cheers them in days of gloom and disappointment. They do not always refer to the particular event of the descent of Christ from heaven, but they speak very frequently of the restoration that will, at that time, be brought about. Then the Good Shepherd will gather His sheep and, in Ezekiel’s words, ‘will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.’”

“Joel describes the arming of the nations and the great strife that will attend the second advent; Zephaniah, Haggi, and Zechariah speak of various aspects of the day of the Lord; and Malachi tells us how it will burn as an oven, and devour the wicked, root and branch. One of the most glowing pictures of all is drawn by Habakkuk. In the third chapter of his prophecy we read of the unendurable brightness of the Saviour’s appearing: ‘His glory covered the heavens.’ It will be as though, instead of one sun in the sky, the firmament were filled with blazing suns. Did ever men yet see such a sight as that?”

“No,” said Mr. Rogers.

“Nor ever will,” continued Mr. Summers, “until the Lord Jesus rides forth in the glory of His Father and of the holy angels, and every eye shall see Him. The prophet goes on: ‘His brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of His hands [ bright beams out of His side, margin]: and there was the hiding of His power. Before Him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at His feet. He stood, and measured the earth: He beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: His ways are everlasting.’ “

“I do not wonder,” remarked Mr. Barker, “that the Jews were mistaken in their expectations of a Messiah. These texts we have been reading do not say very much about the suffering side of the Saviour’s work, and it would be very excusable in a Jew to look for a glorious Conqueror after reading such prophecies as these.”

“They certainly did form wrong conceptions,” answered Mr. Summers; “but they might have gathered the truth from God’s Word if they had studied it in a spirit of faith and humility. Peter tells us in his

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first epistle, first chapter, that the prophets themselves searched diligently to find out what the Spirit was revealing through them, and what time the revelation pointed to when it bore witness of the sufferings of Christ and of the glory *that should follow*. And through the prophet Daniel, God gave a key to this mystery several centuries before the first advent of the Messiah. In his ninth chapter, Daniel tells of a certain prophetic period that was cut off upon his own people, which period was to begin with the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, and to terminate shortly after the cutting off of the Messiah. When the Saviour was speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, He showed that He understood this prophecy, and that others might do so. 'Whoso readeth, let him understand,' were His words, which you will find in the twenty-fourth of Matthew. So every student of the Old Testament prophecies had a good opportunity to know that the Messiah, when He appeared at the expiration of that prophetic period, proclaiming in His own words that 'The time is fulfilled,' had come to suffer and die, to make an end of sins,' and 'bring in everlasting righteousness,' according to Daniel's prophecy. The glory was to come later.

"The Lord has never left men to walk in darkness," continued Mr. Summers. "He tells us that the sure word of prophecy is a light in a dark place, to which we do well to take heed. If Israel had paid due attention to that light, they would have been prepared to receive the Messiah when He appeared; and if we pay heed to its instruction today, we shall understand our own time and its demands upon us. Then when the Messiah comes the second time we shall be ready for Him. We need not be in darkness that that day should overtake us as a thief."

"Well," remarked Mr. Rogers, "I never thought that I was in any danger of making the same mistake as the Jews; but I can see that if I don't study my Bible more earnestly than I have done in the past, the danger is a very real one. Tell us some more about this second advent, Mr. Summers, please."

"When we turn to the New Testament," went on Mr. Summers, "we find it full of the subject of the second coming of the Saviour. Christ Himself often referred to His advent in glory. In the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew we read of signs that He said would be given in the sun and moon and stars, by which the church might know that He was even at the door. Many of His parables pointed the minds of the disciples forward to that day. As we have already seen, the Holy Communion was designed to keep the church in remembrance of the Saviour's next

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appearing; and when He ascended, the angels told His disciples that He would come again in the same manner as he went up. One of the clearest statements on the subject is made by Christ Himself, as recorded in John's gospel, chapter fourteen. Will you read it for us, Mr. Barker?"

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

"Do you see," asked Mr. Summers, "how full of promise these words of Christ were to the disciples whom He was about to leave? Naturally enough their hearts were heavy at the thought of losing Him. What is the comfort He offers them? It is His second coming. He tells them: 'Do not think of heaven as a place in which you have no part. There are many mansions there, and I am going away in order that I may prepare a place for you. Some day I will come back and fetch you, so that we may live together for all eternity.' How the disciples would think over these words in days of darkness! When the world was casting out their names as evil, and some were even thinking it would be an acceptable service to God to kill them, they could always turn in their hearts to the home that Christ was preparing for them, and to the day when He would come to fetch them. Then the exile would be over, and the glorious, everlasting reward would be theirs.

"Paul cherished the same hope, although he had not known Christ after the flesh. One thought gave him courage to go on bearing his testimony, whether men would listen or not, and that thought was that one day he would meet the Saviour face to face, and give account of his life-work. So he wrote to his young comrade Timothy: 'I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; *preach the Word.*'"

"Such a hope certainly would be an incentive to faithfulness in carrying out the Lord's commands," said Mr. Barker.

"Yes," rejoined Mr. Summers, "and it was even more than that. The positive assurance of a personal reunion made Christ a living reality to His disciples, and in that way it made His saving work for men and women more real. At the beginning of our study you asked what difference it made to the Christian whether he looked for the coming of

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the Lord or not. What do you suppose the apostle John would say in answer to such a question?"

"I suppose," remarked Mr. Rogers, "he would be surprised at anyone asking the question. Can you tell us just what he would say?"

"Yes, you will find it in his first epistle, third chapter," answered Mr. Summers. Mr. Rogers, will you read the second and third verses?"

Mr. Rogers turned to the place, and read: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

"The cherishing of this hope, then," said Mr. Summers, "has an effect upon the character. The Christian who looks for his Lord to return will be a better man than he could be without such a hope. And this agrees with what Paul writes to Titus. He declares that the saving grace of God teaches us 'that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.'"

"But this must end our study for tonight. Next time we meet, it will be interesting to consider one reason, at least, why the church has not cherished the blessed hope more warmly, but has allowed it largely to be forgotten."

Both Mr. Barker and Mr. Rogers thanked Mr. Summers warmly for his kindness in giving them such an interesting and profitable evening, and as the two walked together on their way home they agreed that they had certainly done well in accepting the invitation given them by Mr. Summers to spend a little time in ascertaining what the Bible had to say for itself on the subject of the Second Advent.

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### THE GATE OF LIFE

“I would like to ask one question before we begin the study tonight,” said Mr. Barker, as he and Mr. Rogers drew up to the table in Mr. Summers’ sitting room, after the latter had offered a brief prayer that God would guide and bless them all in the search for truth.

“Certainly,” was the response.

“It is this,” said Mr. Barker: “I can feel the force of what you read to us and told us last week, and am convinced that we ought to be familiar with the truth concerning the Saviour’s second coming, and give it a large place in our hearts, but I can’t yet see how that doctrine is going to do Christians any more good than the old idea did, that they ought always to be prepared for death. What is the difference between being ready for the Lord’s coming, and being ready for the hour of death?”

“That is a question that you will have to find the answer to in your own experience,” replied Mr. Summers. “Hitherto you have, I doubt not, found help in remembering the shortness and uncertainty of human life, and in cultivating a state of preparedness for death; but you have given no thought to the coming of the Lord, so you cannot tell how much more helpful it would have been if you had cherished the apostolic hope in waiting for the Lord to come from heaven. With your present experience, it may well be that you can see no difference in the degree of helpfulness connected with the two expectations. But if you cherish what Paul calls ‘the blessed hope,’ you will find a great deal more blessing in it than you ever found in being prepared for death. Indeed, the hope of the Lord’s coming is so inwrought into His own teaching and that of the apostles, that one must perforce get wrong conceptions of truth, and occupy a wrong point of view, if one fails to give it its rightful place.”

“Well,” said Mr. Barker, “I suppose the matter will grow plainer, as you say. I know we must not expect to get all the blessing there is in any truth by the mere exercise of our intellectual gifts. The Holy Spirit must make the truth a living reality to us.”

“All the same,” put in Mr. Rogers, “I wish Mr. Summers would try to answer the question more directly, for I have the same difficulty. I have been speaking to two or three people since we met last week, asking them if they ever thought of the Lord’s coming. About all I could get was: ‘Don’t



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bother your head about such questions as that. Do your duty day by day, and be ready when the Lord calls you, and you'll be alright!' Now, what can I say to such people? Isn't it just the same to a man whether he goes to be with the Lord at death or whether the Lord comes and fetches him at the second advent?"

"That question," said Mr. Summers, "raises the very point I was intending to ask you to study tonight. If you remember, I said last week that we would consider at our next meeting one reason why the church has in a large measure lost sight of the blessed hope of the Lord's return. Mr. Rogers has just stated that reason. It is that the church today has somehow transferred to the hour of death what the apostolic church connected with the second coming. Christians look now to the time of their dying as the time when they go to be with the Lord. If that view of the matter is correct, naturally enough they fail to see how the coming of the Lord can bring to them any greater joy or privilege than they enter into at death."

"That is my point exactly," said Mr. Rogers.

"Well," continued Mr. Summers, "let us find out first what the New Testament teaches as to the time when Christians do enter into the presence of the Lord. The apostle Paul has given us some very clear statements on this point. Will you turn to the first epistle to the Thessalonians, fourth chapter, and thirteenth verse? Mr. Barker, why does Paul take up this subject, and deal with it so explicitly in the passages before us?"

Mr. Barker read: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope."

"Thank you," said Mr. Summers. "Let us try to get the meaning of the apostle. May we desire to understand the condition of the dead without indulging an idle curiosity? Certainly we may; for Paul says: 'I would not have you to be ignorant.' In other words: 'I am anxious that you should have clear knowledge concerning the departed, so that you may not mourn like the heathen, but may cherish a Bible hope.' Now what is that hope? The next verse will tell us."

Mr. Rogers turned eagerly to the place and read: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

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“How,” asked Mr. Summers, “is the condition of the departed saints described in this verse?”

“They ‘sleep in Jesus,’” Mr. Barker replied.

“Yes,” continued Mr. Summers, “and just as Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring forth His sleeping children from the tomb. Then Paul goes on to tell us just how and when God will raise up those that sleep in Jesus. Note the words carefully, for this passage was written for the express purpose of making us intelligent concerning the dead; so if we are to look anywhere in the Bible for light on this point, it must be here.”

“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

“Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

“We are not left to conjecture,” continued Mr. Summers, “as to how Paul got his information about the resurrection. He writes: ‘This we say unto you by the word of the Lord.’ And what is it that the Word of the Lord teaches? ‘That we which are alive and remain shall not prevent them which are asleep.’ You know, of course, what the word ‘prevent’ means in this passage?”

“Yes,” said Mr. Barker, “it meant to ‘go before’ when the Bible was translated. It is found also in the Prayer Book with the same meaning.”

“Then,” went on Mr. Simmers, “the statement of the apostle Paul is that those who do not fall asleep in death, but live on until Christ comes, will not go to be with Christ in advance of those who have died.”

“No-one ever thought they would,” put in Mr. Rogers. “Surely it is those who die in the Lord who go to Him first?”

“That is the popular idea, but see what the apostle says,” replied Mr. Summers. “It does not seem to occur to him that Christians would ever

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entertain the idea that the dead go first. The only mistake which he regards as possible is the error of thinking that the living will go first to be with Christ. The believers in Thessalonica were troubled about some of their number who had died, and Paul is writing to comfort them, that they may not sorrow without hope. Those who have fallen asleep will not be behind those who live until the coming of the Lord. Why? — ‘For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up *together with them* in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. Now, Mr. Rogers, do those who die in the Lord go first to Him?’

“Not according to these verses,” was the answer.

“Notice how plain the statements are,” said Mr. Summers. “First the Lord descends with a shout, and with the trump which awakens the dead in Christ; they rise up from the grave and stand on the earth with those who have not died; then both classes, living and raised, are caught up together in the clouds, where they meet their Lord; and so, in this manner, are they ever with Him. Not at death, then, but at the resurrection the believer meets his Lord, and so us he ushered into the bliss of being ever with the Saviour. What use does Paul say we are to make of this teaching, Mr. Barker?”

“Wherefore comfort one another with these words,” read Mr. Barker.

“Now suppose,” said Mr. Summers, addressing himself to Mr. Rogers, “that you were calling on Mrs. Williams, whose husband is to be buried tomorrow, and were trying to give her some comfort in her sad bereavement. What would you say to her?”

“I did call there yesterday,” answered Mr. Rogers, “and I told her what I thought was true, that her husband was now in glory, and that it was wrong to wish him back again; that some day she would go to join him there.”

“And were you acting on the instruction of Paul, when you comforted her with those words?” asked Mr. Summers further.

“Well, it seems I wasn’t,” confessed Mr. Rogers. “But I have always been led to believe that a Christian went to be with the Lord at death. I suppose, after what we have been reading here, if we attempt to give

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Bible comfort to the mourners, we ought to tell them about the coming of the Lord to raise the dead.”

“That is true,” replied Mr. Summers. “You can both see now why it is that people have had their minds turned away from the coming of the Lord and the resurrection. They have been taught that death does for them what only the resurrection can do, and if at death they go to be for ever with the Lord, why should they look forward to the resurrection? Every time we comfort others, we ought to point them to the blessed hope, and so keep that fresh in all minds. But, as the result of leaving it out of our reckoning, we have come to ignore it, and to think of the world as going on and on indefinitely, while the good enter heaven individually at their death.”

“Is there any light on this question in Paul’s great chapter on the resurrection?” asked Mr. Barker.

“Yes,” was the reply; “let us turn to first Corinthians fifteen, and read, beginning with the fifty first verse:

“Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.’ Here Paul is stating the same great facts which we found in his epistle to the Thessalonians. The fifty-fourth verse tells us,” went on Mr. Summers, “when we get the victory over death. It is not at the moment of dying, but when we rise from the grave, glorified, to meet the Lord. ‘So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.’

“Do you see from these words of the apostle Paul,” asked Mr. Summers, “how tremendously important the second coming of the Lord becomes to the believer? It is not only the time of the Saviour’s return, but also the time when we shall put on immortality. Then there will be no more sin and no more death, for death will be swallowed up in victory. Not when we die, but when the Lord comes, do we enter the gate of life. Yet, is it not a fact that the doctrine of the resurrection is as much ignored today as the hope of the coming of the Lord, although it was one of the principal topics of the early church? We read in Acts 4:33: ‘And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.’ “

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“Yes,” ‘the resurrection of the Lord Jesus,’ “ said Mr. Rogers: “of course they had much to say of that; everybody knows that the resurrection of Jesus is at the foundation of the Gospel; but what did the apostles have to say about the resurrection of His people?”

“They could not separate one resurrection from the other,” was Mr. Summer’s answer. “Don’t you remember how closely Paul connects the resurrection of Christ with the resurrection of the saints? He writes, in 1 Corinthians 15: ‘Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen.’ Again, he says: ‘For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.’ So that the resurrection of Christ is a certain pledge of the resurrection of the saints Every time we think of the resurrection of Christ, it ought to remind us that we, too, are to be raised as He was, and in His likeness. Mr. Barker, will you read verses forty-seven to forty-nine of this chapter?”

Mr. Barker read: “The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” “What a wonderful promise,” he said: “ ‘we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.’ “

“Yes,” rejoined Mr. Summers. “It is indeed wonderful. The resurrection of Jesus is in itself a promise of what we shall be. Christ is ‘the firstfruits of them that slept.’ ‘We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him.’ “

“But what becomes of the Christian when he dies?” asked Mr. Rogers. “where is he between his death and his resurrection at the coming of the Lord?”

“What does the Scripture say?” replied Mr. Summers. “Have we not already read that he is asleep in Christ?” “

“Well, what does that mean?” Mr. Rogers asked.

“It means,” was the answer, “that death is a sleep, from which the resurrection is the awakening. If it were not for the resurrection, as we

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have just read, 'then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.' So, you see, it is very clear that Christians do not enter the bliss and glory of heaven at death. If they did, and the resurrection should never take place, whatever else they lost, they would at least enjoy the life of heaven. But the fact that they 'are perished' without the resurrection is proof positive that they are not alive, somewhere, between death and the resurrection. The resurrection is the very heart of New Testament teaching. We have already had several texts proving this. Perhaps one or two will suffice. What was the essential requirement in an apostle? You will find it in Acts 1:22, Mr. Barker."

"To be a witness with us of His resurrection," read Mr. Barker.

"Yes; and what, to the heathen, seemed to be the whole burden of Christian teaching? We get it from the words of Festus, the Roman governor, in Acts 25:18, 19."

Mr. Barker turned to the place, and read: "Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive."

"You can see from these texts, and from many others which we have not now time to read," said Mr. Summers, "that to take the resurrection out of the teaching of the apostles would have been to rob it of its very life. Indeed, the apostle himself shows this, for, going back to 1 Corinthians 15, we read there his words that, if there is no resurrection, 'then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.' Now tell me, does the preaching of today lay as much emphasis on the resurrection as this?"

"I never heard any preaching that did," admitted Mr. Rogers.

"Speaking for myself," said Mr. Barker, "I have always believed that one day there would be a resurrection, when the soul would be re-united to the body, but I never heard any very clear teaching on the subject. Besides, to my mind, it did not seem to matter much whether the resurrection came soon or was a great way off, since we went to be with Christ at death, and the resurrection of the body could not add anything to our heavenly happiness."

"But can you not see now, from the texts we have read," asked Mr. Summers, "that the resurrection, so far from being a matter of indifference, is one of vital importance to the Christian, for the reason

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that until the resurrection takes place he is not awakened from his sleep; and that it is at the resurrection, and not before then, that we go to be with the Lord?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Barker, "I cannot help seeing that; I must confess that this study has been a revelation to me. But it is there plainly in the Word of God and I cannot but believe it."

After a few parting words Mr. Barker and Mr. Rogers set off on their homeward way, profoundly impressed with the truth that had come to them.

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### THE SINNER'S FATE

Promptly at the appointed time Mr. Barker and Mr. Rogers presented themselves at Mr. Summers' house to continue their weekly study of the Scriptures. Mr. Summers led them in prayer, and asked earnestly that the Lord would grant them knowledge and understanding according to His promise, not for their own sakes alone, but that they might better be able to serve and glorify Him.

As the three men rose from their knees and opened their Bibles, Mr. Summers suggested that they take up a consideration of some of the evils that have arisen out of an unscriptural view of man's nature and his state in death.

"Before you take that up," said Mr. Rogers, "I wish you would help me out of a difficulty I have got myself into. I have been telling old Mr. Day something about our Bible studies. I thought he would be pleased to hear of some of the things I had learned, but he did not take kindly to them at all. He said that if I didn't mind I should find myself becoming an infidel. I pointed out to him that, so far, it wasn't working that way; that I was much more interested in the Bible than ever I had been before. But he said such doctrines as I was talking about would do away with the Gospel, for if people got the idea that there was no hell for the wicked at death, they wouldn't trouble about their sins, or about being saved."

"But there is a lake of fire, the second death, into which every one will be cast whose name is not written in the book of life," said Mr. Summers.

"Well, I wish you would give us a few facts about what it is that happens to sinners," said Mr. Rogers. "Mr. Day quoted some texts to me about everlasting torment, that I could not answer. I gave him texts to prove that we do not live on after death, but he answered me back with texts showing that the soul would suffer for ever and ever; so we came to a deadlock, and he went off thinking he had the best of it, and advising me to give up my new-fangled notions."

"Have you brought the texts he gave you?" asked Mr. Barker.

"Yes, I think I have got them all down here on this piece of paper. I had better give you them," was the answer. "The first one is Matthew twenty-five, verse forty-six: 'And these shall go away into everlasting



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punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.’ Now, as Mr. Day pointed out to me, the punishment is said to be everlasting, and the same thing is said about the reward. If one of these statements does not mean what it says, how do we know that the other does?”

“The words certainly mean what they say,” answered Mr. Summers. “The question is, Do the words say what we think they mean? Suppose we examine them. What is the punishment of sin?”

“That’s what I am in doubt about, and want to clear up,” replied Mr. Rogers.

“Well, you will find an explicit statement from Paul’s lips in the epistle to the Romans, chapter six, verse twenty-three: ‘For the wages of sin is death.’ What is due to the sinner, then, Mr. Rogers?”

“Death,” was the answer.

“For how long?” asked Mr. Summers. “Will the sentence be revoked after seven years, or after any period, so that the sinner can come forth again from death, and enjoy once more the privilege of life?”

“No, of course not,” answered Mr. Rogers.

“Then we might say that the sentence passed upon the sinner is one of everlasting death, and since we have just read that the reward of sin is death, everlasting death is an everlasting punishment. The words, ‘These shall go away into everlasting punishment,’ simply mean, ‘these shall go away into everlasting death.’”

“I wonder I didn’t think of that,” remarked Mr. Rogers. “But in the forty-first verse Jesus says: ‘Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. Now we know from Several scriptures that even the devil and his angels will not be tormented for ever. The epistle to the Hebrews tells us that Christ died ‘that through death He might *destroy* him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.’ So Satan himself is to be destroyed. Then, again, the last chapter of the Old Testament tells us that ‘the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.’ How many does Malachi say are thus to be burned up?”

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“All that do wickedly,” said Mr. Rogers.

“So, then,” continued Mr. Summers, “we have in this passage from the book of Malachi the same fire spoken of by Christ, into which the wicked will be cast, together with the devil and his angels. Satan is the root of wickedness, and sinners form the branches; but in that devouring fire both root and branches will come to an utter end. What, then, will the result of the everlasting fire be?”

“It will burn to ashes whatever is cast into it,” said Mr. Barker.

“True,” replied Mr. Summers. “and this agrees with the language used on one occasion by John the Baptist, which you will find in the third chapter of Matthew, verse twelve: ‘He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.’ The word ‘unquenchable’ means ‘that cannot be quenched,’ but although the fire is unquenchable, it does not follow that what is thrown into it will go on burning for ever and ever. We have in this text a plain statement that the effect of an unquenchable fire is to *burn up* the chaff.’ So, again, when we read of an ‘everlasting fire,’ it does not follow that the material on which it feeds will continue for ever. Although the wicked are cast into an everlasting fire, they will not go on burning everlastingly, but as Malachi tells us, will be destroyed root and branch.”

“Well, here is another text that Mr. Day gave me to prove that the wicked suffer eternally,” said Mr. Rogers; “it is in the ninth chapter of Mark, verses forty-three and forty four: ‘And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.’ I suppose you could say the same about this passage as about the last; that it does not tell us that the sinner will suffer eternally, only that the fire is unquenchable. I admit that, according to the words of John the Baptist, unquenchable fire does *burn up* what is thrown into it, but I am afraid I could not get old Mr. Day to admit it. Can’t you please, give me an explanation of this text in Mark that will silence him?”

“It seems to me,” replied Mr. Summers, “that the text we have already read in Malachi is as perfect a refutation of the theory of eternal torment as you, or even Mr. Day, can ask. It does not leave a single loop-hole of escape from its positive statements. Remember what it says. There will be a day of punishment for ‘all that do wickedly,’ and that day

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shall burn as an oven. Malachi tells us what the wicked shall be in that day, not gold or some indestructible substance, but stubble — about the most combustible thing that one could think of. Then the text goes on to say that the wicked shall be burned up, and to make it quite plain that they are absolutely burned up, we are told that neither root nor branch will be left. Could anything be plainer or more specific in its statements than that, Mr. Rogers?”

“No, I don’t see how anything could,” answered Mr. Rogers.

“But even that is not all,” went on Mr. Summers. “We stopped with the first verse, but Malachi goes on— or rather the Lord, for the passage reads, ‘saith the Lord of hosts’ — to say still more about the end of sinners. He tells us first what will be the portion of the redeemed: ‘But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.’ Then the prophet tells us what and where the wicked will be at that time. ‘And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts.’ This is in harmony with what has gone before. Put stubble into a fierce fire, and all that will come out of the flame will be ashes. So the wicked will be reduced to ashes, and will return to the earth from which they were taken, dust to dust. When the righteous tread on the surface of the new earth they will walk on all that is left of sinners. If Mr. Day is not willing to listen to your explanation of the passage in Mark, ask him to explain this passage in Malachi.”

“I will,” said Mr. Rogers.

“However, the passage in Mark offers no real difficulty,” continued Mr. Summers, “when you bear in mind the general teaching of the Bible on this subject. You will notice that it is not the sinner who is said not to die, but the worm; it is not the sinful existence that never shall be quenched, but the fire. The Saviour is quoting here from the last words of the book of Isaiah, and it is plain from his language that Isaiah refers to the very same time that Malachi has in view.’ ‘And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against Me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.’ In what condition, then, are the wicked, when they fall victims to the undying worm and the unquenchable fire?”

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“They are carcasses,” said Mr. Barker.

“And what does that word mean?” inquired Mr. Summers.

“It means that they are dead bodies, as dead as the carcasses in the meat market,” was Mr. Barker’s answer.

“That is evidently the idea conveyed by Isaiah’s words,” answered Mr. Summers. “The gnawing of the worms and the fury of the flames are not felt by the sinner after the point at which he becomes a carcass.”

“But I don’t understand why the worms do not die eventually,” said Mr. Rogers.

“We are not told what becomes of them after their work is done,” said Mr. Summers, “but we can see very clearly that the words applied to them cannot mean that the sinners on whose carcasses they feast go on suffering for ever. If the worms were likely to die and the flames to expire, the sinner might possibly escape his fate; but that cannot be: the fire is unquenchable, and the worms do not die; so the end of the sinner is certain.”

“Would you like to hear my next text?” asked Mr. Rogers. “You seem to have disposed of the first two quite thoroughly.”

“Wait a moment,” said Mr. Summers. “Did you stop to think at all how those to whom Jesus spoke would understand His words in the passage?”

“I see by my Revised Version,” remarked Mr. Barker, “that hell is the word *Gehenna*. What does that mean?”

“Gehenna simply meant the valley of Hinnom,” replied Mr. Summers. “This valley was just outside Jerusalem, and was the place where all the rubbish of the city was burned. Dead bodies of animals and sometimes of malefactors were cast on this huge rubbish heap. Fires were continually kept burning to consume the refuse and prevent pestilence, and, naturally, the decomposing mass bred worms in abundance. So there was Gehenna right before the eyes of the Jews, a place where worthless rubbish was cast, not to be preserved, but to be destroyed as thoroughly as possible; and the agents relied upon for its complete destruction were the worms and the fires.”

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"I am glad you told us that," said Mr. Rogers. "It makes the passage seem quite simple."

"Yes," continued Mr. Summers, "the point must have been very plain to the dwellers in Jerusalem. Jesus advised His hearers to suffer any loss in this life, even if it were as severe as the loss of an eye or a limb, rather than to be cast at length, on the rubbish heap of the world's Gehenna, as refuse fit only for the agencies of utter destruction."

"I wonder," said Mr. Barker reflectively, "why the fire in which the wicked perish is said so often to be unquenchable. Have you any idea Mr. Summers?"

"Well," answered that gentleman, "I am not prepared to answer your question positively, but I can see some reason for the expressions used. Have you ever noticed that the righteous also are to pass through the same fire?"

"No, surely not," said Mr. Rogers.

"Turn to the thirty-third chapter of Isaiah," continued Mr. Summers, "and there you read: 'The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' The answer to this question is: 'He that waketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil.' So you see the righteous will also pass through everlasting burnings, but there will be an all-important difference between them and the wicked."

"Our God is a consuming fire," quoted Mr. Barker.

"Yes, that's it," responded Mr. Summers. "Evidently the fire that burns up the wicked and turns the earth into a lake of fire is the consuming glory of God, and in that blaze of glory the righteous are in perfect safety. What is death to the wicked is life to them. So we read in one Scripture concerning the second advent of the Saviour, that the glory of His power destroys the wicked. You might read from the second epistle to the Thessalonians, Mr. Rogers, first chapter, beginning with the last part of verse seven."

Mr. Rogers turned and read: "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus

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Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints."

"Thank you; that will do," said Mr. Summers. "You notice, do you not, that the very glory which is in that day manifested in the saints is the same glory that destroys the wicked?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Rogers. "Doesn't it say somewhere about Christ that His countenance is like the sun shining in its strength, and that His eyes are as a flame of fire?"

"John so described Him in the first chapter of the Revelation," answered Mr. Summers. "And the same apostle also describes the terror of the wicked, as they pray to the mountains and the rocks: 'Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne.'"

"I must try to make old Mr. Day see this point," said Mr. Rogers. "I can understand much better now why the fire that destroys sin must be unquenchable. It will be because the blazing glory of the Lord covers the earth as the waters cover the sea. But I mustn't forget to give you my last text about the eternal torment of the sinner. It's in Revelation, chapter twenty, verse ten: 'And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.' That's a puzzler to me. Whatever can you make of it?"

"Well," said Mr. Summers, "we have often found a text becomes much plainer when we read it carefully. Let us notice this one. What does it say about sinners?"

"Nothing at all," answered Mr. Rogers, after looking at the text and reading it over slowly to himself. "It's about the devil apparently."

"Yes; and if you look at the ninth verse," continued Mr. Summers, "you will find distinctly stated what becomes of those whom the devil deceived: 'fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.' So this difficult text does not refer to sinners, but to the devil. Yet even he, as we have already learned, is to be destroyed at last, so he cannot be tormented eternally. The only conclusion we can come to is, then, that from the time of his defeat, as long as the present age shall last, the devil will be tormented day and night. Mr. Barker, you have the Revised Version. How does it render this phrase 'for ever and ever'?"

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"Until the ages of the ages," answered Mr. Barker.

"That sounds as long as 'for ever and ever,' doesn't it?" remarked Mr. Rogers.

"It does," replied Mr. Summers, "but it suggests that duration of time is reckoned by ages, and that when the ages reach their termination, the torment of the devil will cease. Now the very next chapter introduces us to a new age: 'And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.' That marks a new order of things, then, and perhaps justifies us in thinking that at that time the period of suffering for the devil has reached its appointed limit. Whatever view we take, however, we learn positively that his torment has ceased, for if it had not ceased, the fourth verse could not possibly be true: 'There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, *neither shall there be any more pain*: for the former things have passed away.' At that time, Satan, and sin, and suffering, and death, the former things, have passed away.

"But we must stop at this point. If you still feel, Mr. Rogers, that there is any difficulty unexplained about this subject, bring your question next week, and I feel sure the Scriptures will give you a clear consistent answer."

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## FRIENDLY TALKS ON VITAL TOPICS

### A HARVEST OF EVIL

"And how did you get along with old Mr. Day?" asked Mr. Summers, as the two old friends drew their chairs up once more to his table for their weekly study. "Were you able to answer all his objections, Mr. Rogers?"

"Well," replied that gentleman, "I tried to show him what you gave us last week but he did not seem disposed to study the matter with me. He said he had known his Bible before I was born, and what had been good enough for generations of Christian men, with wiser heads than his or mine, was good enough for him. So I didn't make much headway. He said you were undermining the Gospel by your teaching; for if you took away the fear of eternal torment from the eyes of sinners, very few would trouble themselves about getting their sins forgiven. I told him I didn't think frightening people was the right way to convert them, but he replied that my experience was a rather limited one, and I had a lot to learn yet. So I came away disappointed. You don't think preaching the truth about hell fire and eternal torment will have the effect of making sinners less anxious to be converted, do you Mr. Summers?"

"We are not to stand still questioning what may or may not be the effects of preaching Bible Doctrine," replied Mr. Summers. "We must do our duty, and leave results with God. Our one question ought to be, 'What is truth?' It is our duty to proclaim truth, regardless of consequences. But we may be perfectly sure that the Gospel will not be really advanced by the preaching of error, or hindered by the preaching of truth. Paul tells us, you must remember, that it is the goodness of God, not His sternness, which leads to repentance. God commends to us His love, not the contemplation of torments in hell if we are disobedient."

"There is a text, though, that says something about 'knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men,'" said Mr. Barker.

"There is," answered Mr. Summers; "and we do well to make known the terror of the Lord. But we ought to be careful that we do not proclaim an imaginary terror. Do you remember what it was that Paul preached to the covetous Felix that made him tremble? It is told us in Acts, chapter twenty-four, verse twenty-five: 'And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and *judgment to come*, Felix trembled, and answered, "Go they way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." There is a doctrine which is a terror to the sinner, and we have



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Scripture authority for preaching it, the doctrine of the judgment to come. That doctrine makes known a time to which every one of us must come, when we shall give account of ourselves to the Judge of all the earth. No evangelist need ask for a more thrilling, heart-searching subject than this to arouse the conscience of the unconverted."

"Oh, I wish you would take up that subject with us," said Mr. Rogers. "I have always had a great desire to understand it. I am sure it is as you say, that it does appeal to the heart, for I never heard the subject touched upon in any sermon without feeling a keen desire to listen attentively and learn all I could of it. But I don't really know much about the judgment."

"I should be very willing to study the subject," replied Mr. Summers; "for it is a most interesting and important one. Perhaps we may go into it next week. But I was going to remark that so far as the results of preaching eternal torment are concerned, there are a good many definite evil results to set off against the very doubtful result of alarming the unconverted. I say doubtful because, so far as my observation goes, there are more people turned against the Gospel than are drawn to it by the doctrine of eternal torment."

"I agree with you there," said Mr. Barker. "It has lifted a load off my mind to learn that I need no longer think of my heavenly Father as horribly tormenting a great host of His creatures day after day for weeks and months and years and centuries and ages without end. I know that is one of the first points that an infidel makes use of when he wants to lead a young man astray."

"Yes," said Mr. Summers; "and not only has it blackened the reputation of God outside the church; it has also, naturally enough, had its effect within the church. We cannot wonder that men tortured one another to keep down heresy, and thought they were doing God service, when they were taught to think of God Himself as pitilessly tormenting the lost. A man cannot rise in moral character above the level of the god he worships. If he thinks of God as implacable in revenge, he is sure to display the same disposition himself. But even in the apostate church of the Dark Ages, the human mind revolted against the idea of an eternity of torment. It is indeed unthinkable, an appalling blasphemy against the God of love. So the church invented the idea of purgatory, and thus led men to hope for some termination to their fiery torment. We owe the doctrine of purgatory, with all the priestcraft and superstition that grew out of it, to the doctrine of eternal torment. Today, as you know, we get

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the 'larger hope' and Universalism, as a revulsion against the idea that sinners must be tormented everlastingly. So you see the doctrine has a good deal of mischief to answer for, instead of being a helpful and salutary one.

"The belief in eternal torment," continued Mr. Summers, "is itself the offspring of the false doctrine that the soul of man is by nature immortal. Everybody can see that if the soul is immortal, it must spend eternity somewhere or other. The sinner cannot enter heaven, for whatsoever defiles is excluded from that holy place; therefore, he must remain for ever in the lake of fire into which he is cast. So you see, eternal torment is an inevitable conclusion from the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. We have already noted some false doctrines which owe their existence to the falsehood of eternal torment. There are many more which spring from the mistaken teaching that the soul of man is naturally immortal. You could probably name them yourselves."

"I was running over some in my own mind," said Mr. Barker, "when you mentioned purgatory. I thought: 'Why, what a hole it would make in the doctrines of the Church of Rome if people were to acknowledge the truth concerning the mortality of the soul.' It would settle all the controversy over prayers for the dead, and do away with all the saints. Who would ask a saint to intercede for him if he believed that the saint was lying asleep in the tomb until the day of resurrection?"

"And that is not all," added Mr. Summers. "Think how much the Church of Rome has to say about the Virgin Mary and her influence with her divine Son, and then reflect that she is but dust in the silent grave, and has heard not a syllable of the countless prayers that have been addressed to her for a thousand years."

"Isn't it amazing to think of it!" pondered Mr. Rogers. "What a master of fraud the devil is! I don't wonder the book of Revelation speaks of him as deceiving the whole world. Why, just think of the millions of hands that have been stretched out to Mary, and the millions of voices that have called upon her, and she is as unconscious of it all as a babe unborn. How surprised she will be in the resurrection to learn about it! What a tremendous harvest of ignorance and superstition the devil can reap from the seed of a single false doctrine!"

"It shows," said Mr. Summers, "that we need to adhere closely to the Word of God, and speak it faithfully, or we may find in the judgment that

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we have a harvest to reap we little expected. It shows, too, that a system may look imposing, and yet be less than vanity because based on a falsehood. But even the gross errors of the Church of Rome do not exhaust the catalogue of results that flow from the doctrine of natural immortality. The greater part of heathen religion, with its ancestor-worship and transmigration of souls, and a host of other false and hurtful theories, is founded on men's immortality. Prominent among these is the Spiritualism which is being revived in our very midst today."

"Do you really think there is anything genuine about Spiritualism?" asked Mr. Rogers. "I have read so many accounts of the exposure of trickery in connection with it that I have about made up my mind that it is all a fraud."

"Undoubtedly there has been a good deal of trickery connected with the movement, but there is also a good deal that cannot be disposed of by any such explanation," replied Mr. Summers. "Scientific men who have gone into the phenomena with the purpose of discrediting and exposing them, have been surprised to find themselves in the presence of a mystery that they could not fathom. None of their scientific tests have been able to reveal the secret. It is one of the striking features of Spiritualism that it finds so many of its converts among the leading men of science, who accept nothing that is not capable of demonstration. No; I cannot dismiss the matter by supposing that all these able investigators have been imposed upon by clever conjuring. The true explanation is a far more serious one."

"What do you think, then, that Spiritualism really is?" asked Mr. Barker. "I have always had an idea myself that Christians were forbidden to have anything to do with it, but I could hardly see why, if by it a man might really communicate with his departed loved ones, he should not do so. Now that I know that it is impossible, I can see clearly that Spiritualism must be an evil thing. But who are the spirits that speak through the medium?"

"There is only one possible answer to that question," replied Mr. Summers. "We know they cannot be departed human beings; therefore they must be spirits of evil or fallen angels, personating the dead."

"How horrible!" said Mr. Rogers. "Fancy thinking you were talking to your dead mother, when all the time it was a demon!"

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"It is indeed a terrible delusion," answered Mr. Summers. "The fallen angels are not deficient in cunning, and it is certainly a masterstroke on their part to appeal to the tenderest feelings of the human heart to win acceptance for their falsehoods. But they are skilled in making temptation attractive."

"What is the object of the demons in coming to people through this avenue of Spiritualism; do you know?" asked Mr. Barker.

"Because in that way they can secure a more perfect control over men," answered Mr. Summers. "When one believes that a dead friend is speaking to him, or some person in whom he felt entire confidence, and when he believes, too, that that one has passed away from earth into a sphere of more perfect knowledge, you can understand how he will prize whatever information comes to him from such a source. He will think there is no revelation to be compared with that which comes from beyond the grave. Whatever is told him by the spirit, he will receive with implicit confidence. You can see, then, how the words spoken by a fallen angel, personating the dead friend, will be regarded as gospel by the recipient. Thus the teachings of demons will be firmly believed, and will, in the minds of all who yield to the delusion, displace the Scriptures given to us by God."

"Yes, I have seen that," said Mr. Barker. "The Spiritualists I have met usually professed to believe the Bible, but they thought that their message was far more valuable to men than the Bible, and that without it there was no real evidence of a future life."

"Just so," replied Mr. Summers. "In one way or another the demons displace the Word of God, and thus practically secure the honour due to Him. Wherever they can succeed in doing this, they have almost complete control over the man they lead astray. Spiritualism becomes his religion, and the message of the demons his Bible. In this way the fallen angels are seeking to carry out their old purpose of ruling the world and dethroning God. Wherever Spiritualism is accepted they gain their end, and wherever the immortality of the soul is accepted, there is the foundation laid already for the work of Spiritualism."

"Why, yes," replied Mr. Rogers. "If a man goes on living after death, and enjoys an ampler life than he could possibly live in the body, it would certainly seem to be a good thing to get into touch with him, if it is at all possible."

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"Just so," replied Mr. Summers. "That is how it appeals to most people. You will hear many good and pious men say that they believe the spirits of their dead wives, or friends, are round about them, helping and inspiring them. If that be true, why can the spirits not go a step farther, and speak a few words to those in whose welfare they are so deeply interested? Once grant the immortality of the soul, and there is no apparent reason why you should not go on another step, and grant the possibility and blessedness of speaking with the dear departed. But that is Spiritualism, pure and simple. One main reason why Spiritualism has met with such remarkable success is that its foundation principle, the immortality of the soul, is taught in nearly all the churches. When Spiritualism addresses its appeals and arguments to a member of one of these churches, it finds him already instructed and grounded in its fundamental doctrine. No wonder, then, that the error spreads so rapidly. For you must not think of Spiritualism as comprehending only those who actually call themselves Spiritualists. The devil is too wise to work openly at present. It would alarm Christians too much if Spiritualism appeared before all in its true proportions. The way is being prepared by means of the spread of the doctrines of Spiritualism, under various names and forms suited to different classes of people. But there is a family likeness and connection among all these varieties of doctrine. Spiritualism and Theosophy and Christian Science and the New Thought and the New Theology are all phases of one movement. All of them throw away the Bible and put their emphasis on man's inherent divinity, the proof of which they find, or think they find, in the immortality of the soul. When these have done their preparatory work, I believe we shall see developments that people little expect."

"How did the doctrine of the immortality of the soul first come into existence?" asked Mr. Barker.

"That is easily answered," said Mr. Summers. "We have a record of the very first occasion on which the doctrine was preached, and we also have the name of the preacher. We also know how the idea was received. It was in the Garden of Eden that the immortality of the soul was first broached. Satan was the preacher, and Eve was the one to whom the doctrine was presented. Mr. Barker, will you read to us from the third chapter of Genesis, from the second verse to the fifth?"

Mr. Barker read accordingly: "And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."

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"And the serpent said to the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

"Thank you," said Mr. Summers. "If you look at these three words closely, you will notice some important points. First, there was a conflict between what the serpent said and what God said. The two statements were contrary the one to the other. God said that if man transgressed the command, he should surely die: the tempter said: 'Ye shall not surely die.' So before Satan could gain his end, he must persuade Eve to disbelieve and reject the word of God.

"Second, while God had told man that he was only mortal, subject to death in the event of disobedience, Satan assured Eve that she was immortal. 'Ye shall not surely die.' Here is the first recorded utterance on the subject of the immortality of the soul. It was Satan who preached it, and the doctrine formed an essential part of the temptation which brought about the fall.

"Third, Satan promises that by transgression of God's command, man shall become as a god.

"Now you will find these three points emphasized today in Spiritualism, and the New Theology, and all the kindred movements I mentioned a few minutes ago. There is, first, a rejection of God's Word, second, an assurance of personal immortality, and third, an emphasis on the idea that man himself is divine.

"So you see the origin of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is entirely in keeping with the fruits it has borne in the past and is bearing today. The seed of falsehood was sown by Satan himself; the firstfruits was the fall of man, and the full harvest will be reaped when 'whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie' shall find its end in the lake of fire."

"God helping me," said Mr. Baker solemnly, "I will do all that I possibly can to help other see this falsehood in its true light."

"I am truly glad to hear you say so," said Mr. Summers. "I knew if you would only go into the matter fully, and let the Bible speak for itself, that you could come to no other conclusion. I see it is time you were going, but I would like you to read just one passage more in which God

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speaks especially to those who strengthen themselves in the falsehood of their own immortality, and league themselves with the powers of darkness in their warfare against God. Mr. Rogers, you might read to us from the fourteenth verse of Isaiah twenty-eight."

Mr. Rogers turned to the passage named, and read: "Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because we have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves."

"Now, read on Mr. Rogers, if you please, verse seventeen," said Mr. Summers.

"Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it."

"Thank you," said Mr. Summers. "You see from these words that it is vain to expect anything from death. The man who believes that death is a friend which will bring him enlargement of life, is going to find that covenants with death are worthless, and that the grave has nothing for him. He will perish utterly when the overflowing scourge shall pass through the land. Our efforts must be directed to save men from making their worthless covenant with death, and hiding under a refuge of falsehood. We must make known the truth concerning death and immortality to them, and tell them of the sure refuge which God has Himself provided for the time of storm. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.' Christ is man's only refuge, his one hope of escape from the grave. In Him alone is there any true promise of immortality."

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### THE JUDGMENT

"This week," said Mr. Summers, "I want to take up the subject of the judgment which will gather up what we have studied thus far about the reward of the saints at Christ's coming and the fate of the wicked. There is a great deal to be said about it, much more than we shall be able to cover tonight, but we can at least try to get a few points clear in our minds. You perhaps know what it means to prepare for an important examination?"

"A little," said Mr. Barker.

"Then you know," replied Mr. Summers, "how one's mind is fixed on the date appointed for the examination; how eagerly we seek for information as to the questions usually asked; with what care and diligence we prepare ourselves; and how interested we are in learning the disposition of the examiner and any other details we can get hold of about the ordeal."

"And how glad we felt when it was all over," said Mr. Barker, with a smile.

"Well," continued Mr. Summers, "if an examination on which comparatively little depended was regarded with so much earnestness and anxious thought, how ought we to regard the examination in which our earthly life will be reviewed, to see if we have mastered the course of lessons assigned us here, and whether we are fitted to go up into the higher education of heaven!"

"I am sure we don't think enough of the matter," said Mr. Rogers. "Partly because we don't understand it clearly."

"Then let us see what we can learn," said Mr. Summers, "about the great examination we are all entered for, which none of us can decline, in which we must appear and answer for ourselves, whether prepared or not. Let us see what the questions will be, who the examiner is, if any assistance can be had in the examination, when it will be held, and where. Let us see what the examination will deal with, what will be the rewards, and what the penalty of failure."

"You don't mean to say that we can find information in the Bible on all those points, do you?" asked Mr. Rogers, with a look of wonder in his eyes.



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"We shall see," answered Mr. Summers. "You don't think, do you, that God would judge us without giving the fullest information in all points connected with the judgment? That would not be fair, and it would not be like Him. Suppose we consider first what the judgment will pass in review. What material will be laid before it on which to give a verdict? Mr. Barker, will you read the last verse of Ecclesiastes for us?"

Mr. Barker turned to the book mentioned, and read: "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

"Can you tell us," asked Mr. Summers, "what information is afforded by this verse?"

Mr. Barker thought a moment, and then answered: "Every deed of the life will be judged, whether good or bad, and every secret act will be judged also. So we shall be judged by our works."

"Right," replied Mr. Summers. "One fact that must be remembered in connection with the judgment is that secret things will then be dealt with. That is a very solemn thought. There may be secrets in our lives, known to no human being but ourselves. These must be considered if the judgment is to be a fair and exact one, and they will be revealed then. Deeds of kindness that the right hand had concealed from the left will appear; and deeds of shame, done in the darkness, will likewise come forth.

"Then, again, it is the acts of men that will be judged, not their professions. Because a man goes by the name of Christian, that does not ensure his passing the test. His acts will show whether he was truly a Christian or not, and by his acts he will be judged. But something more than deeds will be taken into account. Mr. Rogers, do you mind reading from the twelfth of Matthew, verses thirty-six and thirty-seven?"

Mr. Rogers found the place, and read: "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

"In what sort of light does that passage show up the frivolous speeches we so often make?" asked Mr. Summers. "When a public speaker remembers that his words are being taken down by reporters, to

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be criticized, perhaps, by keen opponents, and that he may have to justify his language, it makes him careful. How much more should we weigh our words when we remember that every one of them is unerringly recorded, to be repeated in the judgment, and that by them we shall either be justified or condemned?"

"How are our secret thoughts, and words, and acts brought before the judgment seat?" asked Mr. Barker.

"There are books kept in heaven which record fully and minutely the history of every man," replied Mr. Summers. "When the judgment sits, its decisions will be based on the evidence contained in those books. Let us turn to the seventh of Daniel, where the judgment scene is described, and you will find that then the books are opened. Mr. Barker, you might read the ninth and tenth verses for us."

Mr. Barker turned up the passage, and read: "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened."

"Thank you," said Mr. Summers. "Notice what these verses tell us. The thrones are placed, and the Father takes His seat. He is clothed with terrible majesty; the innumerable hosts of angels stand before Him. It is the day of Judgment, and the books that have been kept by the recording angels in view of this very time are now opened. In the twentieth of Revelation, which describes another part of the judgment, we learn what purpose the books serve. Will you read verse twelve, Mr. Rogers?"

Mr. Rogers read these words: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works."

"What do the books contain then?" asked Mr. Summers.

"The story of men's lives," answered Mr. Barker.

"That is what the Bible tells us," said Mr. Summers. "You and I may never be considered important enough to have our biographies written in this world, but each of us is the subject of faithful and minute history,

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recorded by an angel scribe in the courts above. There our daily acts are noted as carefully as those of the most powerful monarchs. We may forget the words we speak, and the acts we perform, but the record survives, and one day it will speak out the plain, unvarnished truth concerning us. But the books of heaven do not record only the idle words we speak. God preserves our more acceptable utterances, and He tells us so in Malachi, third chapter, sixteenth verse. Will one of you please find it and read it to us?"

Mr. Rogers turned to the place, and read as follows: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

"Then, too," continued Mr. Summers, "the Lord records the sufferings of His people. David prayed in the fifty-sixth Psalm: 'Thou tellest my wanderings: put Thou my tears into Thy bottle: are they not in Thy book?' So, you see, everything connected with our earthly experience is recorded in heaven. Our sins, our temptations, our struggles, our victories, will all be made known in the judgment, when the books are opened. All will be taken into account. But there is still another book, the book of life, which seems to contain the names of God's servants. Jesus speaks of this book in the tenth of Luke, verse twenty. Will you read it for us, Mr. Barker?"

These were the words which Mr. Barker read: "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."

"And now, Mr. Rogers, will you place beside this the words of Paul in Philippians, chapter four, verse three?"

Mr. Rogers read: "And I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the Gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life."

"It is evident from these passages," said Mr. Summers, "that one of the books of heaven, called the book of life, contains the names of those who are numbered among the children of God. To have one's name written in this volume means to have a living connection with the

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Saviour. The fact that names have once been written in that book, however, does not ensure that they will remain there. One of the tasks of the judgment will be to decide whether those whose names have been inscribed in God's book of life are worthy to be retained therein. Only the overcomer will have a place at last in that book. This we read in the third of Revelation and the fifth verse."

"So far as we have gone," continued Mr. Summers, "we have seen that the judgment is a very searching investigation of men's lives. Every thought and word and act, whether good or bad, is recorded, and will be weighed in the balances. Now the question arises, By what are our actions to be tried? We are not left without clear information on this point, as you will see if we read again the last two verses of Ecclesiastes: 'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.' What do you gather, Mr. Barker, from these words, as to the standard of character in the judgment?"

"Well," said Mr. Barker, speaking slowly and thoughtfully, "I can only see one answer. If the judgment is to determine whether we have done our duty, and the commandments contain our whole duty, all that the judgment will have to do will be to find out whether we have kept God's commandments or not."

"That seems to be the idea," assented Mr. Rogers.

"Well, then," replied Mr. Summers, "no-one can say that the rule of the judgment has not been made public enough. God Himself has spoken the ten commandments with His own voice, and moreover He wrote them with His own hand on tables of stone. There is no document in existence concerning which we have clearer proof that it came from God and contains His exact thought."

"But the heathen have never heard the law of God," put in Mr. Rogers. "Will they be judged by the commandments?"

"Yes, so far as they know them, for Paul tells us that even the heathen have some knowledge of God's law. Let us turn to the second of Romans, and read verses twelve to sixteen."

Mr. Rogers, having turned to the passage, read accordingly: "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (for not the hearers of the

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law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another;) in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel."

"Thank you," said Mr. Summers. "How many, according to these words, have sinned in the law, and shall be judged by the law?"

"Everybody," replied Mr. Rogers, "that has any idea whatever of right and wrong."

"Yes," said Mr. Summers, "that is clearly stated. Wherever we find the most rudimentary conceptions of right, we can trace the writing of God on the heart; in every such case the man will be judged by the light he has had. The law of God, then, will be the standard of judgment for all. It comprises the whole duty of man in every walk of life. We will only read one more text on this point, from the epistle of James, twelfth verse of the second chapter."

Mr. Barker read the verse: "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." "What law is that?" he asked.

"The preceding verses answer your questions," replied Mr. Summers. "It is the law that says, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not kill'; in other words, it is the ten commandments. But what about the judge?"

"I have been puzzling about that," said Mr. Barker. "We read in Daniel that it was the Ancient of days. But we have just read in the second of Romans that God would judge men by Jesus Christ. Is it the Father or the Son who is the Judge?"

"It seems impossible to separate them," replied Mr. Summers. "God does everything by Jesus Christ. The Father sits upon the throne of judgment, yet the Saviour tells us in the gospel of John, chapter five, verse twenty-two: 'The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.'" You might read also from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter seventeen, verses thirty and thirty-one. Will you read the passage, Mr. Rogers?"

Mr. Rogers read as requested: "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in

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righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead."

"You see again," commented Mr. Summers, "that all men are to be judged. Paul was speaking at Athens to a heathen assembly, but he has the same message of a judgment for them that he has for the Jews. And while no man is excused from the judgment on account of his ignorance of Christ, so no-one is excused because of his profession of faith in Christ. Peter writes to us, in his first epistle, that the Father, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work. Professions of faith in Christ will not be ignored in the judgment, but they will be weighed, and some of them, the Saviour has warned us in His sermon on the mount, will be found only empty words. Here is what He says: 'Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.

" 'Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.' "

"It seems that some will have a rude awakening in the day of judgment," remarked Mr. Barker.

"Yes," responded Mr. Summers. "Which reminds me that we have not yet touched on the question of when the judgment will take place."

"I suppose that will be at the resurrection," said Mr. Rogers.

"Let us see," was the reply. "Did you notice, when we were reading from the seventh of Acts, what the text said on this question of time?"

Mr. Barker turned back to the passage, and quoted: "God hath appointed a day."

"Yes," replied Mr. Summers, "and that day was in the future for Paul, for when he was trying to make an impression on the stony heart of Felix, we read that 'he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.' But it will not always be 'judgment to come' that God's servants will declare. In the fourteenth chapter of Revelation you will find a prophecy of a great world-wide proclamation of the everlasting Gospel a little before the coming of the Lord, and that proclamation has something new to say about the judgment. Mr. Barker, what do you find in the seventh verse?"

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Mr. Barker turned eagerly to the passage, looked a moment, and then read: "The hour of His judgment is come." "When does that apply?" he asked.

"We shall see later," was the answer. "But notice now that the judgment, which up to this time has been future, becomes present. What Paul said would come has come. Now we will look forward a little farther, and read a startling decree that is proclaimed just before the second coming of Christ. Mr. Rogers, read to us what you find in Revelation, the last chapter, verse eleven and twelve."

These were to solemn words which Mr. Rogers read: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

"And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

"I want you to notice three things here," said Mr. Summers. "First, every man's character is then finally fixed. Second, the rewards of God's servants are decided. Third, these decisions are reached before the Saviour's second advent, for He comes bringing the rewards with Him. Now, what follows from these facts?"

"It must be," answered Mr. Barker, "that the judgment is finished before Christ comes."

"Partly," rejoined Mr. Summers. "So far as His own people are concerned. And this agrees with numerous statements in the Scriptures. Read, for instance, the fourteenth verse of the fourteenth of Luke. Christ has been recommending to the wealthy that they call the poor to their feasts rather than their social equals: 'And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.' When do the just get their recompense, then?"

"At their resurrection," answered Mr. Rogers.

"Right. One more text on this point," said Mr. Summers. "Will you read in the fifth of John, beginning with the twenty-eighth verse, Mr. Barker.

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Mr. Barker did as requested, and these were the words he read: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

"Do you see," asked Mr. Summers, "that it is not after the resurrection that the sheep and the goats are divided? Before the resurrection takes place it is known who have done good and who have done evil. When the Saviour comes, it is already known who are accounted worthy of a place in the resurrection of the just, and it has already been decided what rewards are to be bestowed on the righteous. The Saviour comes to awake His sleeping saints, bringing His rewards with him. So it is plain that the judgment of the house of God, so far as the weighing of character is concerned, is over before the Saviour comes. He that is holy remains holy for evermore. All that is left of the judgment of the righteous is the bestowal of the reward."

"So the righteous are not present when their lives are examined?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"Only by the unerring testimony of their life record," replied Mr. Summers. "Whatever of failure and sin that record reveals is unfolded only before those who have known it already, the ministering angels. If the life record shows that faith in Christ has been genuine, and that there has been a sincere appropriation of overcoming grace, the Advocate appears on behalf of the penitent sinner, and pleads His own righteousness. The terms on which His services may be engaged are given us in the twelfth of Luke, verses eight and nine. Read them to us, Mr. Barker."

Mr. Barker read as requested: "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God."

"The terms are fair, are they not?" said Mr. Summers. "The Lord is in heaven, and we are on the earth. He needs our advocacy here: we need His there. If we will represent Him on the earth, He will represent us in heaven."

"We have only considered the resurrection of life, so far," continued Mr. Summers, "but there is another, the resurrection of condemnation."



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"Are not both simultaneous?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"No," was the answer. "We might think so from some references, but in the twentieth chapter of Revelation we are told that these two resurrections are a long way apart. If you look at the end of the fourth verse, you will see that the saints, after their resurrection, live and reign with Christ a thousand years. Now will you read us the next verse, Mr. Barker?"

Mr. Barker did so, reading: "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

"How far apart, then, are the two resurrections?" asked Mr. Summers.

"A thousand years," answered Mr. Barker.

"Now think for a moment," said Mr. Summers. "When the righteous came up, in the first resurrection, it was because they were 'accounted worthy' of everlasting life. It follows that those who were not raised at that time were not accounted worthy. The ones who had a share in the first resurrection were blessed and holy, and on them the second death would have no power: the remainder are not blessed and holy, and over them the second death will have power. So, as far as being ranked among the lost is concerned, the wicked are already judged at the first resurrection. But there is something more to the judgment than merely the division into saved and lost. The righteous were not merely pronounced worthy of life: some were made rulers over much, some over little. Rewards were given to each; in the case of the wicked there will be individual rewards also. The Saviour has told us that some among the wicked will be beaten with many stripes, some with few stripes. When will these differences of punishment be decided, and who will decide them? Mr. Rogers, will you read us the first part of the fourth verse?"

Mr. Rogers took up his Bible, and read these words: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them."

"That will do," said Mr. Summers. "Who are spoken of in these words?"

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"It seems to be the saints and martyrs, judging from the rest of the verse," replied Mr. Rogers.

"Yes," was the reply. "They it is who sit on thrones of judgment during the thousand years that follow their own resurrection, and mete out to the lost the measure of punishment that their sins have incurred. Once the martyrs stood before the tribunals of men, and suffered savage cruelties from their malice. Now the situation is reversed. Those who were once the great men of the earth now receive judgment at the hands of their one-time victims. And it is not only wicked men whose cases are thus dealt with by the saints. Look at the first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter six, verses two and three. Please read the words, Mr. Barker.

They were as follows: "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?"

"Well, I never noticed that before," said Mr. Rogers. "It will be a grand thing to sit in judgment on the devil, and give him what he deserves."

"You must remember," said Mr. Summers with a smile, "that we shall be wiser and more capable of sound judgment then. I fancy when we sit on thrones with the Saviour, and delight in the bliss of heaven, and when we look over the dark story of sin, we shall be moved with more pity than wrath for those who chose the darkness. But it will be a wonderful experience, sure enough, to go through the history of this world, and trace the wisdom and the love of God through it all. We shall be wiser when that investigation is completed. Now when will the resurrection of the wicked take place, that they may receive the rewards which they have earned?"

"At the end of the thousand years," answered Mr. Barker.

"Yes," Mr. Summers answered; "the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished, which is equivalent to a statement that the rest of the dead lived again when the thousand years came to an end. So if you read on in the chapter, you will find at the end of the thousand years there is a resurrection of all the wicked, like the sands of the sea for multitude. Then the great white throne is set up, 'and I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and

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another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. . . . And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.'

"So you see the judgment begins before the second coming of Christ, and lasts for over a thousand years. The execution of its sentence against sinners is the end of the history of sin and of the present sin-cursed earth. A new earth is promised in which there shall be no more curse. But it is late, and we must close tonight's study."

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### A BREACH IN THE LAW

"Last week," said Mr. Summers, as the three friends gathered once more around the table in his sitting-room, with their Bibles before them, "we read some Scriptures concerning the judgment, and learned something of its searching investigation of our lives, of the holy standard by which we shall be measured, and of the rewards that Christ will bring to His own. Tonight I would like to study with you about one particular point in which there is a grave and widespread departure from the law of God. Nearly all Christians, most of them unwittingly, are breaking one of the commandments, and the matter is one that calls for earnest study. If the course taken by the majority of Christians is wrong, a decided change ought to be made, for we cannot come up to the second advent of our Saviour and be ready for Him if we are walking in sin."

"True enough," said Mr. Rogers. "Which commandment are you referring to?"

"Let us look at them, and you will soon see," was Mr. Summers' answer.

All accordingly turned to the twentieth chapter of Exodus, while Mr. Summers read one commandment after another. "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me," was the first.

"Perhaps that is the commandment you mean?" suggested Mr. Rogers.

"No," was the answer. "This one is not kept as it ought to be. There are a good many forms of idolatry even in our own enlightened country, but Christians design, at least, to avoid them. So with the second, they do not bow down and worship graven images. Nor do they consider it right to take God's name in vain. But look now at the fourth," Mr. Summers continued. "What does it say?"

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

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"Do Christians profess to keep this commandment?" he asked.

"We read it regularly in church," answered Mr. Barker.

"But is the commandment itself actually obeyed?" inquired Mr. Summers.

"Well, of course we don't keep the old Jewish Sabbath in this dispensation," said Mr. Barker.

"The commandment does not tell us to keep the old Jewish Sabbath," replied Mr. Summers. "It bids us remember the Sabbath of the Lord."

"Christ changed the old Sabbath for the Christian Sunday;" put in Mr. Rogers. "That is why we keep the first day instead of the seventh."

"Now we are getting at something definite," said Mr. Summers. "Where do you read that Christ changed the day of the Sabbath, Mr. Rogers?"

"Oh, there are several texts in the New Testament," answered Mr. Rogers. "I can't put my finger on one just now. But I can bring you plenty next week."

"Very well; we will leave that side of the question till next week," answered Mr. Summers. "Meanwhile let us notice how important in God's sight is the Sabbath which He commanded us to keep. This fourth commandment is worthy of careful study. What is its first word?"

"Remember," answered Mr. Barker.

"Yes; remember what?" asked Mr. Summers.

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," quoted Mr. Rogers.

"So the Sabbath day is a holy day, and we are to remember to keep it so. How came it to be holy?" asked Mr. Summers.

"The Lord blessed the Sabbath day," read Mr. Barker, "and hallowed it."

"So, then, it took three steps to complete the Sabbath day which we are to remember to keep holy," remarked Mr. Summers. "First, the Lord

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rested on the seventh day, then He blessed the seventh day, and then He hallowed it. Thus it became a holy, blessed rest-day of the Lord. That was how God made the Sabbath. Could man make a sabbath equal to it?"

"No," answered Mr. Barker. "Because man could not create the world in six days and rest on the seventh; he could not bless the day, and he could not make it holy. Man might appoint a rest-day of his own, but he could not bless it or hallow it."

"Well," continued Mr. Summers, "did God wish man to appoint rest-days for himself, to suit his own ideas? Read Mark 2:27."

Mr. Rogers turned to the place, and read: "The Sabbath was made for man."

"So you see," said Mr. Summers, "the Creator who provided man with all that was good for him, provided also a rest-day that was very good, for it was God's own rest-day, blessed and hallowed by Himself. For whom does the text say, Mr. Rogers, that the Sabbath was made — for the Jews?"

"No," was the answer, "For man."

"Think for a moment," said Mr. Summers. "God bids us keep holy a rest-day of His own appointment, which He Himself has blessed and sanctified. He presents this rest-day to man, to the whole race, to be by them observed in memory of His creative work. Surely, if any change is to be made in this institution, we may reasonably expect that the new day of rest will be equally distinguished by God, and given with equal authority to the whole race. Before any change can be made in the day of the Sabbath, the seventh day must be deprived of its character as God's rest-day, it must be stripped of its blessing and of its holiness, and it must be brought down to the level of the other days. Then the new rest-day must be explicitly set apart from the others as a day of divine appointment, and it must be pronounced by God Himself to be blessed and holy. God's own voice proclaimed the sacredness of the Sabbath from mount Sinai. No lessor authority will serve to substitute a new sabbath for the one commanded by Jehovah."

"But," said Mr. Barker, "there was the Passover, and circumcision, and many other institutions, that all passed away when Christ came. Did not the old Sabbath pass away with them?"

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"There is a very important distinction," said Mr. Summers, "between the Sabbath and the Passover and such ceremonies, which we must not overlook. When was the Passover instituted?"

"When Israel came out of Egypt," replied Mr. Rogers.

"Yes," said Mr. Summers; "and you will find that circumcision began in the days of Abraham, and that all the temporary institutions which were types of the work of Jesus, the world's Redeemer, were every one brought into existence after sin entered. There was no need of them before. Man had not fallen, and did not need to be pointed forward to a Saviour. It was different with the Sabbath. That was given to man before sin ever entered our world. It was given in Eden, and it was given to the father of the human race. So it was clearly intended for the whole human family. It was not a type of Christ's redemptive work, for man did not need a Redeemer when the Sabbath was given. The Sabbath, as God tells us in the very words of the fourth commandment, was a memorial, not a type, of a work already accomplished. It bore witness to the fact that God had made the heavens and the earth by His creative power. Now how long would it be proper to keep up such a memorial? Would it not naturally hold good just as long as the heavens and earth remained in existence?"

"It would seem so," said Mr. Barker.

"Certainly," continued Mr. Summers; "and, moreover, if sin had never entered this earth, but man had remained in Eden, holy and happy, do you think the human family would still be keeping the Sabbath?"

"I suppose they would," answered Mr. Rogers.

"And which day of the week would they be keeping holy?" pursued Mr. Summers. "The seventh or the first?"

"That we don't know, do we?" was the cautious answer of Mr. Rogers.

"Yes; we do know," said Mr. Summers. "God does not leave us to speculate on matters of the highest importance. We may be quite certain that if it were not for the entrance of sin, the people of this earth would still be keeping the seventh day holy. We know it because we are told distinctly that in the new earth the redeemed will keep the Sabbath day."

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"Where is that text?" asked Mr. Barker.

"In Isaiah sixty-six;" was the answer. "Please read us the twenty-second and twenty-third verses, Mr. Barker."

Mr. Barker accordingly turned to the passage, and read these words: "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make shall remain before Me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the Lord."

"Do you notice how reasonable this statement concerning the Sabbath is?" inquired Mr. Summers. "We have seen that the Sabbath is a memorial of God's creation, and so ought properly to last as long as the creation of which it is a memorial. Accordingly the Lord says that as the new heavens and the new earth remain, so shall His people remain an everlasting race, everlastingly honouring His creative power by the observance of the memorial which commemorates it."

"That statement in the words of Isaiah about new moons is rather strange, don't you think," queried Mr. Barker, "if his words are intended for Christians? Was not the feast of the new moon a Jewish observance that passed away with Christ?"

"No," answered Mr. Summers. "You will not find any instruction given to Israel concerning any feast connected with the new moon. Whatever they did in the way of celebrating that occasion was not typical of Christ's work. But we have a suggestion in the book of Revelation as to why the nations of the redeemed should gather to worship God once a month. We read of the tree of life that it bears twelve manner of fruits, and will yield its fruit every month. Now the fruit of that tree is one of the delights of heaven, promised as a great reward to the overcomer, and by putting these facts together we can see that every month will witness a joyous festival in the New Jerusalem, at which one prominent feature will be the eating of the fruit produced during that month by the tree of life."

"Will there be a moon, then, in the new earth?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"Yes," replied Mr. Summers. "We are told that the city will have no need of the sun nor of the moon to give it light, because the glory of God and of the Lamb will flood it with superior radiance, but the sun and the



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moon will still be for seasons and days and years. Isaiah, who was shown so much of the new earth, tells us in his thirtieth chapter: 'Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of His people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.' So you see the sun will still pursue his daily round, and the moon will continue its course in the heavens. There will still be days and nights, and weeks and months, and every seventh day for ever and ever will bring round again the memorial of the wonderful works of God."

"All that you say about the Sabbath," remarked Mr. Rogers, "sounds very plausible, but how is anyone to know now which day is the seventh day?"

"Do you know which day is the first?" asked Mr. Summers.

"Why Sunday is, of course," was the answer, "the day of the resurrection."

"Then if we know which day is the first, where is the difficulty in calculating which is the seventh?" answered Mr. Summers. "A child could work that out."

"I mean that the reckoning of time has been lost, over and over again, hasn't it? so that nobody could tell which was the real seventh day that God hallowed," said Mr. Rogers.

"I never heard anything about time being lost," answered Mr. Summers. "When was it?"

"I am not prepared to say definitely, but surely there must have been many times in our world's history when nations relapsed into barbarism, and lost the reckoning of days," said Mr. Rogers.

"Well, let us see," answered Mr. Summers. "We can soon glance over the past and see where such a loss of reckoning was possible. God Himself started the numbering of the days, and made the week consist of six working days followed by a day of rest. This week He gave to Adam as a pattern for all succeeding weeks. How long did Adam live to hand on the knowledge of the divinely ordained week?"

"Nine hundred and thirty years," replied Mr. Barker.

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"Yes," replied Mr. Summers. "Nearly one-sixth of the time covered by human history. Methusaleh was 243 years old when Adam died; and Methusaleh lived until the year of the deluge. In that year Shem was a hundred years old and Shem did not die till Jacob was about forty years of age. So you see it was a very simple thing for the patriarchs to keep alive the knowledge of what God had said to Adam. There was no chance for losing the reckoning of the days before Jacob's time, was there?"

"Not so much as I had supposed there would be," confessed Mr. Rogers. "I never noticed the figures you refer to, but I can see from what you say that very few links were necessary to span the first two thousand years. But what about the time Israel was in Egypt, in the house of bondage? Might they not lose their reckoning there?"

"They might, but it is not likely. God did not leave them to forget His promises nor His commandments; but even if Israel had been unmindful of the sacred seventh day, God Himself would have corrected their error when He brought them out of Egypt. Don't you remember how, before they came to Sinai, they were commanded to observe the Sabbath, and how the manna fell on six days only? Whose reckoning was it that regulated the supply of manna?"

"God's," answered Mr. Rogers.

"Then we know which was the true seventh day at the time of the exodus," answered Mr. Summers, "for we cannot suppose for one moment that God made a mistake, and withheld the manna on the wrong day. From that time until Shiloh came the Jews remained a distinct people. It is true that a large part of Israel became idolatrous to such an extent that ten of the tribes were separated from the nation and scattered, but the remaining two tribes never lost the knowledge of God. In their darkest hours, they had prophets who kept alive the worship of the true God. Even in the seventy years' captivity in Babylon, God was honoured and obeyed by some, as we may gather from the book of Daniel. And when we read of the return from Babylon, we find the leaders of the Jews very strict about the observance of the Sabbath. You remember also how much they had to say about the Sabbath when Christ was on earth?"

"I suppose," put in Mr. Barker, "that no-one would question that Christ kept the right day as the Sabbath, and I don't think there has been any possibility of losing count since."

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"That is true," replied Mr. Summers. "There has been more or less civilization prevailing in Europe ever since the establishment of Christianity, so that time could not be lost. In addition to this, the Jews, scattered in all parts of the world, and unanimous in observing the seventh day, are a testimony that that day has not been lost. Again, for a large portion of the Christian era the first day of the week has been observed by the large majority, and everywhere you go on the face of the earth there is agreement as to which day of the week is the first. Now you can see that if ever a single day had been lost, in any part of the world, there would today be some disagreement among Christians somewhere, as to the true first day, or the same difficulty among some sections of the Jews, somewhere, as to the true seventh day. But no such difficulty exists in all the world, consequently we know that, beyond all question, we have the same reckoning of the days of the week as prevailed in Christ's time, and back of that even to the first week of creation. Therefore no-one need raise any difficulty about the observance of the Bible Sabbath on the ground that we cannot identify the day, for no such uncertainty exists."

"Granted that all you say is true, do you think," asked Mr. Rogers, "that the Lord cares very much which day we keep, so long as we observe one day in seven? Why can we not rest just as well on Sunday as on Saturday?"

"Suppose we take your last question first," answered Mr. Summers. "If the whole object of the Sabbath was to secure for the body a certain proportion of physical rest, naturally one day would answer as well as another. But that is not the reason assigned for giving the Sabbath to man. Remember what the commandment itself says. We are to cease from our work on the seventh day because the Lord rested on that day, and blessed and hallowed it. It is not our Sabbath, but 'the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.' Never mind about 'Jewish sabbaths' and 'Christian sabbaths' and any other kinds of sabbaths. The Sabbath for God's children to keep is 'the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.' We need not concern ourselves to ask whether men have changed the Sabbath. The important question is: Has God changed His Sabbath? If He has, He will have told us so. If He has not, it remains true that 'the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God,' and that it is the Sabbath for His children to keep. But let us read one or two of God's reasons for giving us the Sabbath. You will notice that the idea of bodily rest is kept strictly in the background. Mr. Barker, will you read from Exodus, chapter thirty-one, verse thirteen."

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Mr. Barker turned to the place, and read as follows: "Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily My Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you."

"So the meaning of the Sabbath," said Mr. Summers, "for God's people is much more than weekly cessation from toil. It constitutes a token between Him and them of a certain relation that exists between them. He makes them a holy people, and they are willing that it should be so. Notice the fitness of the sign or token. It is itself a holy day, made so by the sanctifying power of Jehovah. His people keep it as a holy day in token of the fact that He is able to make holy, and in recognition further of the fact that He, the holy God, does make them, His children, holy. Notice, then, on whom the Sabbath forcibly teaches men to depend for holiness. Not on themselves, but on God. The Sabbath was given to direct the mind to God as the source, not only of created life, but also of holiness of character. If Israel had learned that lesson, they would not have become self-righteous, to their own destruction. Do we not ourselves need to be reminded continually of the same truth, and is not the Sabbath as necessary for Christians as it ever was for Jews?"

"There are some further verses about the Sabbath in this chapter," said Mr. Barker, "that seem to bear on what you are just saying."

"Read them, will you?" replied Mr. Summers. Mr. Barker accordingly proceeded to read from the sixteenth verse: "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel for ever."

"Thank you," said Mr. Summers. "You can see from these words that, in God's mind, there was the idea that the lesson of the Sabbath would always be needed by His children. The relation between Him and them, of which it was a sign, was to be a perpetual covenant; therefore the sign would also be perpetual. On the part of God's children it would be an acknowledgement of their utter dependence on Him for sanctification. That this was the chief intent of the Sabbath is stated again by the prophet Ezekiel. Will you read the twelfth verse of his twentieth chapter, Mr. Rogers?"

After finding the passage Mr. Rogers read these words: "Moreover also I gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them."

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"Thank you," said Mr. Summers. "Now I think we are in a position to answer your question Mr. Rogers, as to why we cannot rest on one day just as well as on another. The main object of the Sabbath is to point us away from ourselves to the Creator, as the source of sanctification. Now if in our keeping the Sabbath we take it upon ourselves to vary God's instruction, and set it aside or alter it at our own pleasure, how much utter dependence upon Him do we manifest? Why, in such a case the very thing that ought to be a sign on our part that we rest implicitly in Him, and trust His way, becomes, by our alterations, a sort of declaration of independence on our part, and a sign of distrust of His ways, a token that we feel able to improve in what he has done. Moreover, if we set aside His holy day, and set up a holy day of human authority, we practically claim by such an act to be able ourselves to impart sanctity when we choose to do so. But if we can make anything else holy, it follows that we can make ourselves holy, and do not need that God do this for us. Can you not see, then, that to set up another Sabbath in the place of God's holy day is to set up ourselves as independent of His sanctifying power, and our human sabbath becomes a sign that we set up ourselves in the place of God? Vastly more is involved in this question than the advantage of one day above another for the purposes of bodily rest."

"You have drawn a very alarming picture," said Mr. Rogers. "If what you say is true, it is a serious matter to depart from the keeping of the original Sabbath."

"Now you have answered yourself the other question you raised," said Mr. Summers. "You asked if the Lord was particular about the observance of one day of the week above another. Well, one text will show whether He regarded the observance of a particular day as vitally important. It is in the passage we have already drawn from, in the thirty-first of Exodus. In view of what we have just learned of the deep significance of God's Sabbath, you will appreciate better the reason for the fourteenth and fifteenth verses. Read them, please."

Mr. Rogers read as follows: "Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death."

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"How was it," asked Mr. Rogers, "if the Sabbath was so helpful an institution, and so full of meaning, that the Jews were not prevented by it from backsliding and finally rejecting their Messiah?"

"Because they did not keep the Sabbath as they should," answered Mr. Summers. "They failed to enter into its true meaning. And you must not lay the blame for this on the Sabbath. It is true, of course, that there was no blessing in it for those who did not keep the Sabbath. Jesus, the Son of God, was full of grace and truth, but these did not profit the people who rejected Him."

"But I thought the Jews were so particular about observing the Sabbath," said Mr. Rogers.

"They were at times," answered Mr. Summers, "especially in their later history; but there were many times when God had to chastise them for their disregard of His holy day. And even when Christ came, and found them intensely anxious about the proper observance of the Sabbath, it was their own traditions to which they paid honour rather than the law of God. We will read what Amos was commissioned to say to Israel in his day, some eight centuries before Christ, about their observance of the Sabbath. Mr. Barker, will you please read from the fourth to the sixth verses of his eighth chapter?"

Mr. Barker accordingly read as follows: "Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?"

"Now, remarked Mr. Summers, "this kind of Sabbath observance may have seemed very fair outwardly, but the Lord looks on the heart. It displeased Him that in the hearts where He expected to find thoughts of love and gratitude in return for His great blessings, He saw only selfishness and avarice. Instead of using the Sabbath aright, men were occupying the holy time with plans for defrauding their poorer neighbours. This was altogether inconsistent with God's conception of Sabbath-keeping. The fourth commandment itself requires that we give as much thought to the rest of those under our care and the stranger within our gates as we take for our own rest, and God does not acknowledge as Sabbath-keeping a mere easy, selfish enjoyment of the good things of life, that is content to see others suffering for want of what

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we can give. He made this plain through the prophet Isaiah, who declared that the blessings that were to follow upon true Sabbath-keeping were for those who fed the hungry and dealt bountifully with the needy. The whole of the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah's prophecy deals with the wonderful blessedness that follows unselfish ministry to others, and the chapter concludes thus: 'If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.' "

"That is a very high standard of Sabbath-keeping that the prophet sets up," said Mr. Barker.

"It is indeed," assented Mr. Summers; "and these words go to show how very imperfect an idea men have of the Sabbath when they speak of it slightly as a Jewish ceremony. God says we do honour to Him when we call the Sabbath a delight, holy, honourable. Why, if the Jews had only kept the Sabbath aright, they would today have been enjoying the favour of God, and Jerusalem would be in existence at the present time."

"I should like to know why you make such a statement as that, Mr. Summers," said Mr. Rogers.

"I can very soon satisfy you," was the answer. "Turn to the seventeenth chapter of Jeremiah, and read a few of the closing verses. Begin at the twentieth."

Mr. Rogers turned to the place, and read thus: "Hear ye the word of the Lord, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem that enter in by these gates: thus saith the Lord;

"Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, . . . but hallow ye the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers. . . . And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto Me, saith the Lord, . . . then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, . . . and this city shall remain for ever. . . .

"But if ye will not hearken unto Me to hallow the Sabbath day, . . . then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched."

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"Now you can both see," said Mr. Summers, "that Sabbath-keeping, of the kind that God could accept, would have saved Jerusalem from all the evil it has suffered since the days of Jeremiah. This shows us plainly that the Sabbath, in God's sight, was of vital importance to His people. On their attitude toward it depended their welfare and very existence as a people. But we must close our study for tonight. Do not forget, Mr. Rogers, that you are to bring us a number of texts next week to prove your statement that the Sabbath was changed by Christ from the seventh to the first day of the week."

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### THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH

"Well," what have you discovered, Mr. Rogers, about the change of the Sabbath to the first day of the week?" asked Mr. Summers, as the three friends met once more for their weekly Bible study.

"I have several texts," replied Mr. Rogers. "At first I began to be afraid I had undertaken too much; there didn't seem to be as many statements in the New Testament about the first day of the week as I had thought, and what there was did not seem to help me much. In fact, I was a bit disappointed with the result of my investigation, and I had to ask somebody else to help me. But I think I have got it all right now. The apostles undoubtedly kept the first day of the week in honour of Christ's resurrection, and He taught them to do so by repeatedly meeting with them on that day."

"Very well," said Mr. Summers. "Let us begin with Christ's instruction, then. Where is it recorded that He taught the disciples to observe the first day?"

"Why," answered Mr. Rogers, "there is no definite statement that the disciples were to observe the first day. They kept it in honour of the resurrection of their Lord."

"Did He ask them to do so?" Mr. Summers inquired.

"That isn't recorded," admitted Mr. Rogers.

"Well, is it recorded anywhere that the disciples kept the first day of the week in honour of the resurrection?" asked Mr. Summers.

"Not in so many words," was the answer, "but we can infer it from their frequent meetings on that day."

"Wait a moment," said Mr. Summers. "Do you mean to tell me that you are going to set up a mere inference against the fourth commandment? You have the Word of God for the seventh day, and for the first day you confess that you have no definite command of Christ, and no definite statement by the apostles, only an inference, and that drawn, not by an inspired writer, but by uninspired men."

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"But let me give you the texts," replied Mr. Rogers. "When you put them all together, I think they furnish a good reason for keeping the first day of the week."

"Very well; give us the texts," answered Mr. Summers.

"First, then," said Mr. Rogers, "I will deal with Christ's meetings with His disciples on the first day of the week. All of the evangelists speak of these. Matthew does so in the last chapter of his gospel, which begins: 'In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.' That is one text referring to the first day of the week."

"You notice, of course," put in Mr. Summers, "that the first day is not the Sabbath, but quite distinct from it, in the mind of Matthew."

"But that was before the resurrection," said Mr. Rogers, "when they still regarded the seventh day as the Sabbath."

"You must remember, however," said Mr. Summers, "that the gospels were not written till many years after the resurrection. By the time they were written, the evangelists would certainly know all about the change of the Sabbath, if such a change had indeed taken place, and in writing their accounts of the resurrection the evangelists would naturally be led to make some comment on the new standing of the first day of the week. Yet Matthew, writing at least ten years after the resurrection, calls it simply the first day of the week, and gives the old sacred title of 'Sabbath' to the seventh day of the week. Is it not evident that Matthew, when he wrote, still regarded the seventh day as the Sabbath and the first day as an ordinary day of the week? And unless the evangelists say something about a change of the Sabbath, how is anybody to know that there had been a change?"

"I admit that Matthew does not say anything in favour of the first day of the week. But Mark says more about it," continued Mr. Rogers. "In his last chapter he speaks of it twice. Once in the second verse: 'And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.'"

"I suppose," Mr. Barker remarked, "Mr. Summers will say again that Mark is careful to give the seventh day its old title of honour, while he gives none to the first day, for I see that the first verse begins: 'And when the Sabbath was past.'"

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"But," said Mr. Rogers, "Mark brings in the first day again in the ninth verse. 'Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene.' Why are we told twice that it was the first day of the week if it was not the intention that we should honour the first day as the day of the resurrection?"

"It is easily understood why the details connected with the resurrection are given so minutely," said Mr. Summers. "The resurrection was one of the great events on which the faith of the church was to be founded. It was the great subject of the witness of the apostles, and the facts must therefore be plainly and fully declared. But it is the resurrection itself, not the first day of the week, that is to be made much of. Besides, if you read on you will see that the disciples were not meeting with Christ on that first day because they believed in His resurrection. Verse eleven says of those who heard Mary's testimony that they believed not. Then He appeared in another form to two as they walked, and they told it to the rest, but still the rest would not believe. 'Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief.' Then they were not meeting for worship on that day, and neither Matthew nor Mark speaks of any subsequent meeting on the first day of the week. Can you show us, Mr. Rogers, a single statement in the gospels of Matthew or Mark that the first day is made holy, or that Christians are to observe it? Is there any evidence in their writings that either of them ever heard of any such change?"

"No," replied Mr. Rogers. "I must admit there isn't."

"Well, if there is any foundation at all in the gospels for any such idea as a change of the Sabbath," remarked Mr. Summers, "you ought to be able to find it in Luke's account. In his preface he seems to have set before himself, as 'having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first,' the task of supplying what other 'eyewitnesses and ministers' of the Word' had omitted. So if there had been a change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week, and Matthew and Mark had omitted to mention it, Luke would supply what is lacking."

"I have only one text in Luke's gospel," answered Mr. Rogers, "the first verse of the twenty-fourth chapter: 'Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared.' It does not seem to add anything to what we read in the two previous gospels, so I suppose you will not admit that this proves anything for the first day of the week."

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"On the contrary," said Mr. Summers, "it proves a good deal. When a gospel is written for the express purpose of informing people fully on all points that other writers have passed over, and that gospel passes over the first day of the week without referring to any sacredness about it, it is good proof that there is no sacredness to mention."

"Perhaps," suggests Mr. Barker, "Luke's mind was too full of the subject of the resurrection to stop and refer to the new standing of the first day of the week. That might not have been the best place to speak of it."

"Well, if all the Bible writers pass over the matter in the same way, who is to know anything about Sunday sacredness?" asked Mr. Summers. "If the first day of the week is to be kept in honour of the resurrection, surely the chapters which describe the resurrection on the first day are a good place to speak of the new institution. But Luke's mind was not too full of the resurrection to stop and comment on the sacredness of the Sabbath. He writes: 'And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment.' Just think a moment. Here was Luke writing about the resurrection several years after it happened. Two days have to be mentioned in his narrative, the Sabbath day and the first. According to the common idea that the Sabbath had been changed, Luke, at the time of writing, would be an observer of the first day of the week, regarding it as a sacred day. Yet he passes over that day without a word about its importance, or value, or sacredness, and speaks of the Sabbath as the day required to be kept by divine commandment. Which of the two, seventh or first, is the sacred day in the mind of Luke when he writes his gospel?"

"You are wrecking my argument," said Mr. Rogers. "But I was not relying much on those texts in the gospels. I did not see much in them myself."

"It seems to me," said Mr. Summers, "that there is a good deal in them, but it is all dead against Sunday sacredness. However, I want to hear your other texts."

"John's gospel seems more favourable," said Mr. Rogers. "He mentions the first day twice. Once in the first verse of the twentieth chapter, which says: 'The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre.' That adds nothing to the texts we have already read, but verse nineteen shows that the disciples

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had a meeting on that same day, and verse twenty-six shows that they had another meeting a week later, also on the first day of the week. These facts surely indicate that they recognized the first day of the week as a day for holding their meetings, and the circumstance that Jesus met with them on these occasions indicates that He approved of the arrangement. This is regarded, I am told, as the origin of Sunday observance in the Christian Church."

"Then it is an exceedingly doubtful origin," remarked Mr. Summers, "for you have founded it on some very questionable statements. You speak of the meetings of the disciples, but they lived together, so that they did not need to be specially convened in order to be present when Jesus appeared to them. On the occasion of their meeting Jesus on the first day of the week they were assembled, not for worship, but for fear of the Jews. On another occasion when Jesus appeared to them, they were fishing in the Sea of Tiberias, so that was evidently not a sacred day with them. Indeed, there is no evidence that Jesus ever met with His disciples on a first day after the day of His resurrection."

"What about this statement, then," asked Mr. Rogers, "that 'After eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus,' in verse twenty-six?"

"The statement is plain enough," answered Mr. Summers. " 'After eight days' would bring us to Monday, at least, so that this verse cannot be quoted as evidence of a meeting on the first day. If John wanted us to understand that the meeting 'after eight days' was on the first day of the week, it was a very simple matter for him to say so. Even if it could be proved that 'after eight days' meant a week, and brought us round again to the first day of the week, the expression is so vague that we may be perfectly sure the writer who employed it had no desire to impress our minds with the sacredness or pre-eminence of that day mentioned. The most reasonable conclusion is that John meant what he wrote, after eight days, not after seven days."

"Well," said Mr. Rogers, "those are all the texts I can find in the four gospels that refer to the first day of the week. There are six of them altogether. As I said at the beginning, I was rather disappointed at not reading more about the first day in the New Testament, but when I found there were eight references to the first day, I thought that all of them, taken together, would surely be sufficient to settle the point. The first six do not seem to help much, but the last two are by far the strongest."

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"We only want to know the truth," said Mr. Summers, "so if your two remaining texts, or even one of them, teaches us to regard the Sunday as a sacred day, we must bow to the authority of the Word."

"Well, turn to the twentieth of Acts," said Mr. Rogers, "and there you will find that it was a common practice in the early church to observe the first day of the week as a sacred day."

"Which verse contains the statement?" asked Mr. Summers.

"The seventh," answered Mr. Rogers. "I will read it. 'And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.' What more do you want in the way of proof that the apostles kept the first day of the week?"

"But are you not reading into the text a great deal more than it contains?" asked Mr. Summers. "You speak of the apostles' observing the first day of the week as a sacred day. I do not see any expression that supports this idea. Do you?"

"Why, the disciples came together on that day to break bread," answered Mr. Rogers. "Isn't that sufficient?"

"No," said Mr. Summers. "When the Lord instituted the Supper He never said anything about its being eaten on a holy day. The apostles seem to have broken bread daily, according to Acts, chapter two, verse forty-six: 'And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.' Why not reason from this verse that every day was a sacred day? The argument would be just as sound as the one you draw from the twentieth of Acts. You do not think that every day on which a religious service is held thereby becomes sacred, do you?"

"No, of course not," answered Mr. Rogers, "but this verse indicates that it was the regular thing for the early church to break bread on the first day of the week."

"I don't see any statement to that effect," replied Mr. Summers. "There is not a word inserted to say that it was according to custom, or that the day was sacred. There is a very minute account of the visit, telling who was with Paul, whence each came, whither the party was

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going, by what route, how some went before to Troas, how the rest sailed away from Philippi, and when they sailed, how many days it took them to go to Troas, how many days they spent there, and then, naming the day of the week, it gives a minute account of the proceedings of that day. It is hard to see how more facts could have been crowded into a few verses; yet for all this minute detail of statement, the writer omits to say anything about the first day of the week being sacred, or a day observed in any way by the early church. On the other hand, his minute details do establish very clearly that this meeting to break bread on the eve of Paul's departure has nothing whatever to do with Sunday."

"What! Do you mean to say you are going to turn my strongest text against me?" said Mr. Rogers.

"I only want to get at the truth," answered Mr. Summers. "You know, of course, that the Bible day was not reckoned like ours, from midnight to midnight, but by the setting of the sun. The evening and the morning, measured from sunset to sunset, constituted the Bible day."

"Yes," answered Mr. Barker, "I believe that is right."

"In other words," continued Mr. Summers, "the first day of the week began at sunset on what we call Saturday evening, and ended at sunset on what we call Sunday evening. Luke is the writer of the Acts, and we know from the gospel written by him that he followed the Bible reckoning. When Christ was taken down from the cross, he says: 'The Sabbath drew on.' Now the point to be considered is this, did the disciples come together to break bread on the Saturday-evening part of the first day of the week, or when?"

"Is there anything in the account to show?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"Yes. The narrative is quite full, as we have already noted," answered Mr. Summers. "It speaks of Paul's preaching until midnight, and of many lights in the upper chamber where they were gathered together. So it was the dark part of the first day of the week, and the meeting was prolonged until the light part of the day came. But the dark part of the first day of the week answered to our Saturday evening, so that even if we admit that the breaking of bread made the occasion sacred, we have only proved that Saturday evening is sacred time. Do you observe Saturday evening as a sacred portion of time, Mr. Rogers?"

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"No," was the reply; "nor does anyone else."

"Then notice what happened on Sunday morning, at break of day," continued Mr. Summers. "The party proceeds on its way. Part go by ship and sail to Assos; Paul decides to walk across country to that place. All you can get for Sunday out of this chapter is the fact that the apostle Paul uses it as a day for travelling. You can't condemn Sunday travelling out of the Scriptures."

"Well, you don't leave much Sunday sacredness in the twentieth of Acts," remarked Mr. Rogers.

"There never was any in it," replied Mr. Summers. "I thought for years there was, but when I set this passage against the rest of the Bible, to try to make out a case for Sunday as against the Sabbath, I soon discovered that the Bible does not contradict itself. The very passages that, at first, seem to be difficulties often contain striking confirmation of the truths taught in other portions."

"My last text," said Mr. Rogers, "is found in the first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter sixteen, verses one and two: 'Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.' This seems to be another evidence that the first day was held in high regard in the early church, and it must have been a day when they met together, or Paul would not have given instruction about taking up a collection on that day."

"Are you not reading too much into the text?" asked Mr. Summers.

"How am I?" inquired Mr. Rogers. "I should like to hear what you have to say about this passage, Mr. Summers."

"Would it not be better," answered that gentleman, "to let the text speak for itself? But I would suggest that you first note what the text does not say. For instance, I do not find that this passage confers any more honour upon the first day than the other texts we have read, and you will remember that all of them, with striking unanimity, refrain from crediting the first day with any vestige of sacredness or any title to observance as a day of rest. Can you, Mr. Rogers, point to a single expression in this passage that indicates that the first day is a holy day?"



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"No," was the answer, "unless the fact that the Christian churches met upon it shows that they regarded it as a sacred day."

"But there again," said Mr. Summers, "I see nothing in the passage to indicate that the Christians of Galatia or Corinth did meet on the first day of the week. Do you?"

"How could they take up collections if they did not meet together?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"But there is nothing in the text about taking up collections on the first day of the week," said Mr. Summers. "The words of the apostle are: 'Let every one of you lay by him in store.' Suppose I suggested to you the importance of laying by you in store some provision for your old age, what would you think I meant?"

"Why, of course, I should think you were advising me to save a little money, and not spend everything I earned," was the reply.

"Well," replied Mr. Summers, "is not that the obvious meaning of the apostle? He bids them to lay by some of their means in store, so that when he pays them his promised visit, every one will be prepared to make a contribution to the fund, and there will be no need then to agitate the matter. But the laying up is to be 'by him,' each man preparing by himself for his own offering. If the apostles had used only the expression 'by him,' it would have been quite plain that he was not referring to a public collection, but when he goes on to say 'in store,' that makes his meaning doubly plain. 'Let every one of you lay by him in store' contains no suggestion of a public collection. Where, then, is your assembly on the first day of the week, Mr. Rogers?"

"I confess, the text does not support the idea of a meeting on the first day when you examine it closely," replied Mr. Rogers. "But I found this text given as one of the proofs of the change of the Sabbath, and so I put it down. I thought surely eight texts would be sufficient to prove the point, even though they did not explicitly say that the Sabbath was changed."

"One text would be enough," replied Mr. Summers, "if it actually stated that the first day took the place of the seventh day as a sacred day, but in the absence of a direct statement it does not advance matters to quote eight texts, or eight hundred. It is our duty to examine carefully

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what the Scriptures actually say, and not accept heedlessly what they are reported to say. No court will accept evidence at second hand when the witnesses are present to give their own testimony. We must let the Scriptures speak for themselves. I think we shall generally find that they are well able to do so."

"Suppose you tell us, then, what you find in this passage," suggested Mr. Rogers.

"Willingly," replied Mr. Summers. "We have already noted that it does not say anything about Sunday sacredness. Then does it throw any light at all on Paul's view of the first day of the week? I think it does. With him the first day is evidently a day for going into figures to ascertain how the Lord has prospered you. It is a day for book-keeping, for business investigation, for handling money. Corinth was a great city, a busy seaport. Some of the Christians were perhaps merchants — certainly, in the course of time, some would be — and to find out how they were prospering financially might easily be for many of these a business of some magnitude, not arrived at by a simple calculation. Paul evidently saw nothing out of place in a business man's being in his counting-house, examining his affairs, on the first day of the week. So, you see, while we find nothing in this text enjoining meetings on the first day, we do find, on the other hand, something very much like an enjoining of attention to business on the first day. In the twentieth chapter of Acts we saw Paul travelling on the Sunday; here we find him giving counsel that means Sunday trading, with shops and offices open, on the first day of the week."

"But why should Paul tell the Christians to attend to this matter on the first day of the week?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"He doesn't give the reason," replied Mr. Summers. "Probably he felt that such a gift as he enjoins would be a right beginning of the week's work. Certainly it seems like a sound business principle that a man should know how he was prospering before he began the work of a new week. God always expected His people anciently to know where they stood in matters affecting money, for He asked them to pay the tenth of their increase to Him. Paul had been trained along these lines, and this may have been why he would have the Christians begin their weekly round with a suitable offering to God, who was the source of what ever prosperity they enjoyed."

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"There is one text," said Mr. Barker, "which I thought Mr. Rogers would bring forward, and that is the tenth verse of the first of Revelation: 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.' I find that this text is quoted as a proof for Sunday observance, and I must confess that I had always regarded it in the same light myself. But, according to what you have shown us, the apostles were not observers of the first day of the week, and, of course, in that case they would not be likely to term it 'the Lord's day.' I should be glad if you could prove clearly which is the Lord's day, Mr. Summers."

"The reason I did not give this text too," said Mr. Rogers, "was because I thought the other texts showed that the day had been changed, and this one simply gave the new name to the new sabbath."

"In other words, you took it for granted that the first day was the Lord's day," answered Mr. Summers. "That is what most people do, of course. They see 'Lord's day' everywhere applied to Sunday, and when they see 'Lord's day' in the Revelation, they at once conclude that the two days are identical. But we must take our stand in the first century, not in the twentieth, when we consider the term 'Lord's day' as used by John. The question is: What did it mean for him? and when we have answered that question we have learned what it ought to mean to us."

"Well, what did John mean by the 'Lord's day'?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"That we can learn, certainly, from the Scriptures," was the answer. It cannot have been the first day of the week, for although the first day is mentioned eight times, it is never spoken of as the Lord's day. On the other hand, the seventh day of the week is again and again spoken of as the Lord's day. 'The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God,' says the commandment. 'My holy day,' God calls it through Isaiah. And Jesus Himself says: 'The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.' Now when the Lord Himself declares His lordship of the Sabbath, it is very plain which is the Lord's day. Thus the evidence that the Sabbath is the Lord's day is as positive as anyone can ask, while there is not a tittle of evidence that Jesus, or the Father, ever laid claim to the first day of the week."

"I wonder why John should say 'Lord's day' instead of 'Sabbath,' if he meant the seventh day of the week?" queried Mr. Rogers.

"Was not the Revelation written at the end of the first century," asked Mr. Barker, "and may not the church have begun to honour the first day by that time, calling it the 'Lord's day' instead of the first day?"

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"But," replied Mr. Summers, "John's gospel was written after the Revelation, and in that gospel he speaks twice of the first day of the week without calling it the Lord's day or hinting at its sacredness. No, it is true that near the end of the second century we find men speaking of the Sunday as the Lord's day but there is no evidence in the Bible that this was done in the time of the apostles. And in reply to Mr. Rogers' question, why John should employ the words 'Lord's day' when speaking of the Sabbath, can you give any reason why he should not?"

"I can't think of any," admitted Mr. Rogers.

"Well," continued Mr. Summers, "I can think of two good reasons, at least, why the apostle John should use the term 'Lord's day' for the Sabbath. First, the Sabbath was the memorial of the Creator, but when John looked back at the creation it was Christ that he saw there at work. Read us what he says in the beginning of his gospel, Mr. Barker."

Turning to the first chapter of John's gospel, Mr. Barker read these words: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made."

"Now," said Mr. Summers, "remembering that the Word was Christ, as we plainly see from verse fourteen, you can easily understand why John connects Christ with the creation and with the hallowed rest of the seventh day. To him, his Lord was the Maker of earth and sea, and of the Sabbath, and He who was Creator was made flesh, and became man's Redeemer. To John, the Sabbath was a commemoration of Christ's whole work for him, and a sign of his rest in Christ's completed work. Again, in his first epistle John speaks of Christ as 'that which was from the beginning.' Seeing Christ, with God, in all the past, John feels a new attraction in the Sabbath as coming to him from the Lord Jesus Christ. That which was Jehovah's day to the people of old becomes also the 'Lord's day' to the members of the church of Christ."

"You don't think, then," said Mr. Barker, "that it is fitting that a new day should be observed in honour of Christ since He has come?"

"Why should it be so?" asked Mr. Summers. "Are not the Son and the Father one? Can we honour the Son except as we honour the Father? We may be very sure that Christ will be better honoured by our obeying

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His Father's commandments than by our breaking them on the plea of doing honour to the Son. But there is a second reason I was going to give you why the apostle should call the Sabbath the 'Lord's day,' and then we must close our study for tonight. For nearly forty years of his life, from the ascension of Jesus to the destruction of Jerusalem John, in obedience to the word of Christ, had prayed that when the Christians were compelled to flee from Jerusalem, their flight might not be on the Sabbath. How could he help having the Saviour closely associated in his mind with the sacred day? Must not the example and precept of Christ concerning the Sabbath have been continually before him, and when, on lonely Patmos, the Sabbath hours were brightened with the vision of Jesus in His glory, was it not most natural that John should speak of the Sabbath as the Lord's day?"

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### A TEST OF FAITH

"Well," said Mr. Summers, as the three friends met once more in his sitting-room for their weekly study of the Bible, "what are we to take up tonight? Are you convinced yet that Sunday is not the Bible Sabbath, Mr. Rogers?"

"Yes, I can see well enough that the fourth commandment has nothing to do with Sunday," replied Mr. Rogers. "But I have been talking the question over with one of my friends, and he has sent me several little books on the subject. I haven't read them all yet, but I am beginning to doubt whether the law has not been done away with, and the Sabbath along with it."

"I hope you will be very careful indeed how you allow your mind to be led in that direction," said Mr. Summers. "Try every position by the Word of God. Remember Christ's injunction to His disciples about praying that their flight from Jerusalem might not be on the Sabbath. Remember, too, that John speaks of a Lord's day in the Revelation, and remember Isaiah's prophecy about the continuance of the Sabbath for ever in the new earth. These are solid facts. Do not let human reasoning carry you away from the truths revealed in God's Word."

"But the books I have been reading give plenty of texts to back up their arguments," said Mr. Rogers. "How is anybody to know what is truth?"

"The Lord has promised to lead us," put in Mr. Barker, "if we are determined to do His will. The Saviour has said: 'If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.' I have been studying into this matter very carefully for the past week or two, and it seems to me quite clear that we have gone astray in leaving the commandment of God and obeying the tradition of men. I can see nothing for it but to confess the error, now that I recognize it, and go back by God's help to the path of obedience to His Word. I tried at first to think that it was a matter of small importance, and that I need not bother my head about it, but the more I read the Bible to see what was truth, and the more I prayed about it, the more it came home to me that I was being tested by this truth which has come to me. I felt that I could not go on as before, professing to be a disciple, if I refused to walk in the light that had come to me. Then I would think of all the ministers and congregations that were

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observing Sunday, and how audacious it would seem for me to differ from them all in this matter, but while I was thinking like this one evening, I looked up and read the text over my kitchen fire-place: 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.' So I made up my mind that I would obey the Lord, if I was the only one to do so."

"What," said Mr. Rogers, "do you mean to say you are not going to the shop on Saturday? What do you think the firm will say to you?"

"I shall know more about that by tomorrow," said Mr. Barker. "But I think I know what the Lord will say, for I have His own Word to tell me."

"It seems suicidal to me," exclaimed Mr. Rogers, "for a man to run the risk of losing his job in times like these for the sake of keeping the right Sabbath."

"Have you thought," asked Mr. Summers, "that it may be even more suicidal for a man to turn away from God's Word to walk in the path of disobedience? What does the Bible say is the wages of sin, Mr. Rogers?"

"Death," was the answer.

"Well, if a man works for such wages, is not his service one prolonged suicide?" asked Mr. Summers. "But I do not believe that Mr. Barker will come to any real harm by obeying God's will. You know we have found in the past that God's Word, earnestly examined, answers a good many questions, and it is just as satisfactory a guide when a man gets into an extremity like this."

"Will it tell a man where to find a job when he gets out of work?" asked Mr. Rogers, with a rather defiant expression.

"Yes, it will," answered Mr. Summers, "if he is willing to work; it tells him where he can be taken on for life, at a living wage, with a pension on a still higher scale to follow."

"Well, I wouldn't mind risking my present place for a job like that," said Mr. Rogers. "But are you making fun of me?"

"No, indeed, I am not," answered Mr. Summers. "I am telling you what you will find in the Bible, if you are willing to enter the service. Shall we look at Christ's own words? You will find them in the sixth of

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Matthew: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.' What things shall be added, Mr. Barker?"

"Food, drink, clothing, and all things that your heavenly Father knows you have need of," quietly answered Mr. Barker.

"Then you see," said Mr. Summers, "if a man will seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, in other words, seek to be ever found in the path of obedience by faith, God guarantees all necessary things to him."

"Where is the pension you spoke of?" inquired Mr. Rogers.

"That is the kingdom," answered Mr. Summers. "Isn't a kingdom a good pension? And we know the kingdom will be possessed for ever. Whoever seeks first the kingdom, gets that, and gets all he needs in this world in addition. So you see, Mr. Rogers, if Mr. Barker closes with this offer of Christ's, he is always sure of the necessities of life, without anxiety on his part, and in addition he receives a kingdom as his reward. What guarantees have you to set against this to show the superior advantages you enjoy if you do not keep the Lord's Sabbath?"

"Our firm doesn't guarantee anything," said Mr. Rogers.

"Well, then, is Mr. Barker's course so very suicidal after all?" asked Mr. Summers.

"Well," said Mr. Rogers, "if I was my own master, I don't know but what I would keep the seventh day myself."

"In other words," said Mr. Summers, "if you could see your way clear, and did not have to exercise faith in God for your support, you would venture?"

"I suppose you might put it that way," assented Mr. Rogers.

"Well, then," said Mr. Summers, "that would not be keeping the Sabbath at all."

"And why not, pray?" asked Mr. Rogers in surprise.



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"Because," was the answer, "Sabbath-keeping means resting in the Lord. If you were to keep the Sabbath because you happened to have money in the bank, you would be resting in the bank deposit, not in the Lord. If the bank became shaky, your rest would be troubled, and if the bank suspended payment, away would go all your peace of mind. Whereas the man who truly keeps the Sabbath cannot be disturbed. He rests in the living God, and as long as God endures, the rest also remains."

"I don't quite understand," said Mr. Rogers, "why keeping the Sabbath should mean that kind of rest."

"The commandment itself makes the matter plain," said Mr. Summers, "and the whole teaching of the Bible is in agreement. We are to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Why? 'For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.' What did God accomplish in six days? Why, He made earth and sea and sky and birds and fishes and all vegetation and the animals and man. That is the power He has. How can I say to Him who made me: 'I am afraid to rest on the seventh day, lest I starve?' Fancy a human being looking up to the great God that made him and feeds him, as well as countless millions more, and being afraid to put confidence in Him for his own few little wants. When we remember who it is that asks us to keep the Sabbath, what can we do but obey Him, and let our minds rest in the conviction that He is well able to take care of us. Even if all the people in the world were arrayed against us for obeying Him, we could still rest in the Creator's power, because He is greater than all. None could exist a moment but for Him."

"I think I can see the point," said Mr. Barker. "We are to keep the Sabbath in honour of the Creator, and we do not honour Him as the Creator when we fear the men whom He made as much as or more than we fear Him."

"That is it exactly," replied Mr. Summers.

"You almost persuade me," said Mr. Rogers, with a smile. "Indeed, if you could tell me where I could get work and keep the Sabbath I believe I would make up my mind at once. You certainly have the Scriptures on your side, and I feel prepared to join you and Mr. Barker in keeping the Sabbath just as soon as I can find a situation where I can do so. Of course, you know of plenty such."

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"No, I do not," said Mr. Summers. "And you may think it strange, but if I did I should not tell you of any before you had taken the plunge."

"Why not, pray?" asked Mr. Rogers in surprise.

"I should be afraid of doing you an injury," answered Mr. Summers.

"However could your telling me of a situation where I could keep the Sabbath be an injury to me?" inquired Mr. Rogers, with an air of still greater surprise.

"Let me explain what I mean," said Mr. Summers. "Suppose you learn today of a job where you can keep the Sabbath just as well as not; you accept it, and begin to observe the seventh day. So far so good. But suppose next month, or some time in the future, the job comes to an end, and you cannot see any other work in sight where you can continue to keep the Sabbath, what then?"

"I don't know what I should do then," said Mr. Rogers.

"Exactly," answered Mr. Summers. "It would then be an uncertainty whether you would be an observer of the Bible Sabbath or not. But can't you see that the same uncertainty would really attach to you all the while you were in the new job? You would be thinking of yourself as a Christian who was determined to follow the Lord fully, and perhaps others would be thinking the same of you, and possibly wondering in their own minds whether they ought not to be following your example. Then would come the crash. You would lose your job, and find out that it was the job, and not the Lord, that you had been building on all the time, and perhaps in the hour of trial you would conclude in despair that it was impossible to keep the Sabbath, and would drop it. Then what would the people who had been watching you think of the whole matter? Wouldn't they decide to stay as they were?"

"I don't believe I should give up like that if I once started," said Mr. Rogers.

"But how can you tell," asked Mr. Summers, "unless you settle the whole question to begin with? Then you will know where you stand, and you never will know till you do. Suppose you make up your mind, in any event, whether you live or starve, to observe the Bible Sabbath. You trust in the living God. He gave you the situation, and if that one disappears

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He can give you another. Even if you have to pray in dead earnest, 'Give us *this day* our daily bread,' you can trust your Father to send the answer. So, whatever comes, you have no distress of mind about whether you ought to keep the Sabbath or not. You have decided that it is God's will, and all you have to do is to look to God to give you what you need. Then if people watch you they will learn something, for they will see a man faithful to God, and God faithful to His promise. If you pass through a severe trial of your faith, you will be just as well off, for since God lives and His promise cannot fail, a man is just as secure who gets his supplies daily from God as the man who gets a whole year's supplies at once. You believe that, don't you, Mr. Rogers?"

"Why, yes, of course," was the answer, "but I would sooner have the supplies come in a quantity, so that I could have something by me all the time."

"Naturally we all feel that way," said Mr. Summers. "But if a man begins to walk in the light as fast as he sees it, he sometimes has to drop the things he used to rely upon, and deal more directly with God, and perhaps he has to ask for help a little oftener. That's my experience, at least. And now, perhaps, you understand why I said I might do you any injury by telling you of a job where you could keep the Sabbath before you had made up your mind that, live or die, you would obey God's commandment. The Lord sends us this light, in part at least, as a test of our faith, to find out how much we do really trust in Him. It is a good thing for us to know just where we are, and if we have not been actually putting our whole confidence in the Lord, but have been in reality building on some other foundation, and then through some severe lesson we do learn to put our confidence in the living God for even what we eat and wear, it makes a wonderful change in our lives. After that God becomes real to us. Then we have a God as we never had before. A man can make no more blessed discovery than to find out by personal experience that God lives and answers the requests of His children. The Sabbath test comes to you and gives you an opportunity to find out by experience that God can take care of you when you have nothing else to depend on. If I cheat you out of that wonderful experience by helping you to make it merely a matter of passing from one job to another, I am doing you an actual injury. Some time or other you would have to learn the lesson, and now is the best time to learn it. Until you do learn it you haven't any idea of what it means to be God's child. Trusting Him for temporal things will give a deeper reality to all your Christian experience."

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"It seems to me, though," said Mr. Rogers, "that this Sabbath question will make it very hard to be a Christian. You won't get many people converted with an obstacle like that staring them in the face."

"You must remember," said Mr. Summers, "that it is not God who has made the difficulty, but those who have departed from His commandment. That is one result of wrong-doing: it always will make a return to the right path more difficult. But we shall not make it any easier by continuing to tread the way of transgression. The longer we walk in disobedience, the harder it will be for us to retrace our steps and get into the right road."

"Well, it looks to me quite hard enough now," said Mr. Rogers, gloomily; "hard enough to keep anyone back."

"I have often wondered why it was," said Mr. Barker, "that it should be so easy for people to be Christians in this age of the world, when it was so difficult in past centuries. You can hardly find in all the history of the church, until a hundred years ago, a time of peace and quietness, when all were free to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience. Now I find that to truly follow the Lord, even in the days of seeming peace, brings a severe enough test to the believer. But I am sure that it is better so. Adversity was always a blessing in disguise to the church of Christ."

"That may be," said Mr. Rogers, "but give me the time of peace."

"You would like to be a strong Christian, wouldn't you, Mr. Rogers?" asked Mr. Summers.

"Why, yes, of course," was the answer.

"Well, don't forget how strength comes. How did you get that strong right arm of yours?"

"By twelve years of hard work," said Mr. Rogers.

"Just so," replied Mr. Summers. "Now suppose when you started life you had made up your mind to avoid everything that meant labour and weariness. Would your muscles have grown hard in such a life?"

"No," answered Mr. Rogers.

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"But now you are well-developed, and able to do a man's work in the world. And," continued Mr. Summers, "don't you think God is better pleased to see you strong and vigorous than He would be to see you puny and feeble? And isn't He just as anxious to see you strong spiritually? And won't spiritual strength come by work and effort and endurance? How can you have strong faith if your faith has no trials to develop it? Abraham was tested severely, and so were all the Bible heroes, but the discipline made them strong in faith, until they were able to accomplish mighty deeds by their faith in God. Study carefully over this matter, Mr. Rogers, and don't forget to seek guidance from the Lord. Remember that we are in Christ's school, and that the way to make a true success of this life is to learn well the lessons He sets us here. Come again next week, and we will study the subject further if you desire."

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### UNDER GRACE

"Well, Mr. Barker, and how did you get along with your employers when they learned that you were not going to work any more on the Sabbath?" asked Mr. Summers, as the three friends gathered once more in his sitting-room. "Are you out of work?"

"No; not yet, at any rate," answered Mr. Barker. "I had a rather unpleasant interview with the manager over it, but so far I have not been discharged."

"What did he say to you?" inquired Mr. Rogers.

"First it seemed to puzzle him. The idea of not working on the seventh day was a complete surprise to him. He wanted to know if I had become a Jew. I told him, No; I was going to keep the Sabbath because I could see no other way of continuing to be a Christian. Then he asked if I had consulted a minister about it. I told him I had done so, but could get no relief or satisfaction that way, and that, whatever a minister said, I should have to decide finally by what the Bible said. Then he said he feared I was losing my reason and getting religious mania. I said I trusted not. He hoped I would do nothing rash, and I said I had studied and prayed over the matter very carefully, and thought I had been rather too cautious than otherwise. Finally, he began to get annoyed, said it was a great nuisance with so much work on hand just now, and he supposed I should have to have my own way, but I must lose my time while I was away from work. He said if I wasn't such a careful workman he wouldn't have kept me, and hoped I wouldn't go putting the same idea into the heads of the other men."

"Well, you've been very lucky," said Mr. Rogers. "I certainly thought you would have been out of a job by now."

"I don't look upon it as luck," said Mr. Barker. "I have committed my way to the Lord, and I expect Him to provide for me in one way or another. If it had rested with the manager alone, I have no doubt he would have discharged me, but God can move the heart of a king, so I suppose He knows how to influence a manager's decisions. But I have been thinking about you as much as of myself, Mr. Rogers. I am hoping we shall walk together in this experience, the same as we have done in so many others."

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"I can't see yet," was the answer, "that Christians are expected to keep the Sabbath. If I saw it I would, of course, obey at once; but I have been studying further into the matter, and I think you have made a mistake in the step you have taken."

"If I have I will retrace it," said Mr. Barker. "What have you found out?"

"Well, I have been talking with one or two about this Sabbath question, and I had some tracts given to me that bear directly on the subject. They are based on the Bible, too, and they show that the Sabbath is now abolished, and it does not matter which day we keep."

"That's strange," said Mr. Barker. "If the Sabbath is abolished, it would surely be wrong to keep any day. But who abolished it, and when?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Rogers, "but Paul tells us it was abolished in his epistle to the Colossians. Here it is, chapter two, verses sixteen and seventeen: 'Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.' That shows that the Sabbath has passed away with the meats and drinks and holy-days, which were a shadow of Christ."

"But," said Mr. Barker, "didn't we find Christ charging His disciples to pray that their flight might not be on the Sabbath, for some forty years after His resurrection? There must have been a Sabbath during that time. How, then, could the Sabbath have been abolished at the cross?"

"More than that," put in Mr. Summers, "do not forget that the Sabbath is to be observed for ever in the new earth, according to the prophet Isaiah. So it cannot be a shadow of things to come. There is nothing 'to come' after the Sabbath passes away, for it is never to pass away."

"Then, too," said Mr. Barker, "didn't we learn that the Sabbath was first given in Eden? How can you class it with the types which were given to Israel? there was no promise of a Saviour when the Sabbath was instituted, for man had not fallen at that time, and so there was no need of a Saviour."

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"Yes, I believe we did agree about all those things," said Mr. Rogers, "but how can you get away from Paul's words to the Colossians? They seem plain enough."

"They are perfectly plain," replied Mr. Summers, "but so are the facts we have just mentioned. Consequently, there must be an equally plain explanation of the apostle's words, and I think you will admit in a moment that this is as clear and plain as all the rest.

"First," he continued, "is the Sabbath a shadow?"

"Doesn't Paul say it is?" inquired Mr. Rogers.

"No," answered Mr. Summers. "He speaks of sabbath days, which he classes with meats and drinks and feasts as types and shadows, but the weekly Sabbath of the fourth commandment is not in that class at all. If you listen to the fourth commandment, it bids you remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, and then tells which is the Sabbath day, and how and why it became holy. We are referred by the commandment back to the day on which God rested after His six days of creative work.

"Well," said Mr. Rogers, "I wish you would show me from the Bible what other kinds of sabbaths there were, that you say Paul is referring to. I never heard of any but the kind you have been speaking of."

"I will with pleasure," said Mr. Summers. "Mr. Barker, will you please read from the twenty-third of Leviticus, verse twenty-four?"

Mr. Barker turned to the passage, and read these words: "Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation."

"Now will you please read to us, Mr. Rogers, what you find in the thirty-second verse about the day of atonement?" asked Mr. Summers.

Mr. Rogers read: "it shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath."

"Thank you," said Mr. Summers. "If you will read the thirty-ninth verse you will find two more sabbaths mentioned, and there is no



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question at all that these were all typical sabbaths, shadows of things to come. So I hope you can see, Mr. Rogers, that Paul's words to the Colossians, which cannot possibly refer to the weekly Sabbath made for man, given to him at creation, to be observed world without end, are clearly a reference to the ceremonial sabbaths."

"I must admit that your explanation seems quite reasonable," said Mr. Rogers.

"Not only reasonable, but entirely Scriptural," added Mr. Barker.

"If one did not know these facts, he might be led to think that Paul was opposed to the rest of the Bible on the Sabbath question. But now that difficulty is cleared away."

"Have you any other difficulties to put before us?" asked Mr. Summers.

"Yes," replied Mr. Rogers. "There is a text in the fourteenth of Romans which seems to me to make very light indeed of the Sabbath, or any other sacred day. Even allowing that the Sabbath is a holy day, according to Paul it makes very little difference whether we keep it or not. Let me read you his words: 'One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it.' So if I think it is all right to keep Sunday, while you think you ought to keep the seventh day, what is the difference between us?"

"Are you not jumping to a conclusion without carefully weighing the apostles words?" remarked Mr. Summers. "It seems to me there is more in them than you represent."

"Then tell us what it is," said Mr. Rogers.

"In the first place," said Mr. Summers, "you must not overlook the condition of the man whose observance or non-observance of a day is unto the Lord. 'Let every man be *fully persuaded* in his own mind.' What does 'fully persuaded' mean?"

"I suppose it means perfectly positive that he's right," replied Mr. Rogers.

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"Yes," said Mr. Summers, "it must certainly mean that. Now suppose for a moment that the case about which Paul is writing is a conflict between the respective merits of Sabbath and Sunday. I am pretty sure it wasn't, but suppose, I say, for a moment that it was. When is a man to feel satisfied that he is doing right in Sabbath-keeping or Sunday-keeping? When is he 'fully persuaded in his own mind?' For a Christian disciple that involves finding out what the will of the Lord is. Now I put it to you Mr. Rogers. We have been over this question already, and have seen what the Bible says about the Sabbath and about the first day of the week. You bring up this verse, now, in the epistle to the Romans to justify you in the observance of Sunday. I ask you to tell me candidly which passage of Scripture it is that has led you to feel 'perfectly positive' in your own mind that it is God's will that you should keep the first day of the week."

"I don't think I could give you one," admitted Mr. Rogers in dubious tones.

"Then," said Mr. Summers, "you can't be fully persuaded in your own mind that God wants you to keep Sunday, or you would have at least one clear text to that effect. Now, if I may, I will put the question to Mr. Barker, if he is '*fully persuaded*' in his own mind that he ought to keep the Sabbath, and what has fully persuaded him."

"I can answer the question very clearly," replied Mr. Barker. "I am perfectly positive that it is God's will for me to keep the Sabbath, and I have His own Word again and again to that effect. Shall I give you some examples, Mr. Rogers?"

"No, you needn't," was the answer. "I know if it comes to quoting Scripture you have the best of the argument. But I think Mr. Summers is making too much of the words 'fully persuaded.'"

"I only applied your own definition of them," said Mr. Summers. "Surely we must read the words of the Scriptures carefully, and give them their full weight of meaning. If you read the conclusion of the chapter, you will see that Paul lays great stress upon the importance of being *fully* persuaded. He says, on another question: 'Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.' So, you see, if your course is not one of faith, without any doubt in it, it is a sinful course."

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"How can a man always know exactly whether a thing is right or not?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"If a thing is right he can know it from God's Word, which is given to be a lamp unto our feet," answered Mr. Summers. "If a man has to depend upon himself for guidance he will often be in uncertainty, but if he walks by faith in the Word, the promise is that the path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day. That certainly means that his pathway will not be marked by doubt and ignorance. But let us look at the text once more. Does it say a man will be all right in what he does, provided he is fully persuaded in his own mind?"

"I thought it meant that," answered Mr. Rogers.

"It doesn't say so," remarked Mr. Barker. "This passage looks to me very much like the one we have just been reading in the epistle to the Colossians. Both say that one man is not to judge another."

"That is so," said Mr. Summers. "Paul is putting the believers in Rome straight on the matter of church relationship. When they disagree on minor matters, one is not to judge another, but every man is to make up his own mind, and then bear the responsibility of his own decision. He must give account of himself to the Lord: no-one else can do that for him: therefore he must decide his own course, and leave his brethren to decide their own. 'Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. . . . So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more.' So, you see, Paul does not say a man is right in the course he takes provided he is fully persuaded in his own mind, but that it is the Lord to whom he must give account, and not his brethren, for the decision he arrives at in matters of doubtful disputation.

"Then there is another thing to be borne in mind," continued Mr. Summers, "and that is, that the matters which Paul is referring to in this fourteenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans are 'doubtful disputations.' That shows very clearly that he is not here referring to the Sabbath."

"How do you know that?" inquired Mr. Rogers.

"Because the Sabbath is not doubtful, nor a proper subject of disputation," replied Mr. Summers. "God has revealed His will very clearly indeed on that point. It is a question of sin, and we are not left in

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any doubt as to what is sin and what is not. Paul tells us again and again: 'By the law is the knowledge of sin.' Whatever was contrary to the ten commandments was sin. Do you think, Mr. Rogers, that if Paul saw any man breaking one of God's commandments, he would call it a matter of 'doubtful disputation,' and say he ought to be fully persuaded in his own mind about the correctness of his course?"

"I should say not," was the reply.

"Then," continued Mr. Summers, "you may be certain that when you find Paul speaking of the observance of certain days as to be classed among 'doubtful disputations,' concerning which every man must be fully persuaded in his own mind, he is not referring to the Sabbath, which is enjoined upon us by God Himself in His holy law, and the non-observance of which is sin."

"I must admit," said Mr. Rogers, "that Paul is evidently not referring to the fourth commandment in his epistle to the Romans. Of course, the law was given to show right and wrong, but then, Christians are not under the law; they are under grace. You must not try to bring them back under bondage."

"Then you regard obedience to the fourth commandment as bondage?" inquired Mr. Summers.

"It looks very much like it to me," replied Mr. Rogers.

"Do you feel the same about the other commandments?" asked Mr. Summers. "Do you feel that your hands are tied because the law says: 'Thou shalt not steal,' and that is a violation of your Christian liberty to impose upon you such irksome restraints as 'Thou shalt not kill,' and 'Thou shalt not commit adultery?'"

"You are making fun of me," protested Mr. Rogers, but Mr. Summers replied:

"Indeed, I am not. It is too serious a matter to jest about; I am only following up your own statements a little. If your position looks absurd when we are dealing with the sixth and seventh and eighth commandments, must it not be just as remote from wholesome doctrine when applied to the fourth?"

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"Well, everybody recognizes honesty and chastity as necessary to Christian living, but the Sabbath is different. People can be good Christians without keeping that," answered Mr. Rogers.

"Perhaps they can in their own estimation," replied Mr. Summers. "But isn't the Lord Himself the best judge of that? You remember what James says about those who set themselves up in judgment on God's law. It is in his fourth chapter, eleventh verse. I like the revised rendering: 'If thou judgest the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. One only is the Lawgiver and Judge.' Do you feel competent to set the Lawgiver right, Mr. Rogers?"

"Of course I don't," was the answer.

"Then, too, you remember what Paul says about the disposition that does not submit itself to the law which God has spoken," continued Mr. Summers. "You can read it for us, please, Mr. Barker, from the eighth of Romans verse seven."

Mr. Barker turned to the text and read these words: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

"Now, then, you can see," said Mr. Summers, "what is it that feels God's commandment to be a yoke of bondage: it is the carnal mind. But that itself is the worst kind of bondage, as Peter says: 'While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.' And you remember Christ's own words: 'He that committeth sin is the servant of sin.' So whenever a man feels that the law of God is for him a yoke of bondage, it must be that the carnal mind rules him. When he escapes from that bondage, he will be able to say like the Psalmist: 'I will walk at liberty: for I seek Thy precepts.'"

"But that was in the Old Testament days," objected Mr. Rogers; "we are under grace now."

"So was the apostle James when he wrote of the ten commandments as the 'royal law,' and the 'law of liberty,'" Mr. Summers replied. "Jesus Christ did not find His Father's commandments a yoke of bondage. The Psalmist foretold that He would say: 'I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart,' as you can read in the fortieth Psalm.

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He walked in perfect liberty, and He makes us 'free indeed' with the same liberty. But He kept the Sabbath according to His Father's commandment."

"But why does Paul say we are not under the law, but under grace?" asked Mr. Rogers, with a puzzled look.

"Because we get righteousness, not by our obedience to the law, but by God's free gift," answered Mr. Summers. "All our righteousness is as filthy rags. We must be clothed in Christ's righteousness. But being clothed, we are not to walk in our own ways, which are sinful, but in God's ways, through the same grace that brings forgiveness. You must not reason that because you are not under the law, but under grace, therefore you are free to disobey the law. That would be an insult to grace. What does Paul say immediately after his statement that we are not under law but under grace? 'What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.'"

"Or in other words," put in Mr. Barker, "shall we break the Sabbath because we are not under the law, but under grace? Won't you quote the apostle now Mr. Rogers, and say with all your heart: 'God forbid?'"

"I must think it over," was the answer.

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### A LIVING FAITH

"Do you have any further questions, Mr. Rogers, with regard to the Sabbath?" asked Mr. Summers, as the three friends once more assembled for their weekly study.

"No. I am through with raising difficulties," answered Mr. Rogers. "I see the Sabbath now in a new light, and by God's help I am going to keep it henceforth."

"Thank the Lord!" exclaimed Mr. Barker.

"I am truly glad to hear you say so," said Mr. Summers. "It is a step you will never regret. It will doubtless bring you hardships, but hardships endured for Christ's sake are the most valuable experiences we can have. No man will ever feel that he has had too many when the Saviour comes. But tell us what led to your decision. I have been fearing of late that you were making up your mind in the opposite direction."

"I was," said Mr. Rogers. "I made up my mind not to come here again after our last study together. I had been trying to find some way of escape from the fourth commandment, but every difficulty I brought up you met, plainly and fairly, with the Bible, until I could see that it was no good fighting against it. But instead of giving up, I felt a spirit of rebellion rising in my heart against the Bible, and God, and everything that belonged to religion. It seemed to me that it was not fair to let such burdens come upon men that were willing to live a Christian life, and I half made up my mind not to give any more thought to religion, but live as others did, and look after my own interests, and enjoy myself. I did not want to pray or read my Bible, or have any more to do with it. But the Lord was merciful to me. When I went to bed I couldn't sleep. My mind kept running over my past life. I thought of my conversion, and how happy I was then to know that Jesus was my Saviour, and that my sins were all forgiven. I wished I could be as happy again. Then I remembered how I used to think that if ever persecution should come again, I would go to the stake rather than deny my Saviour. Yet here was I turning back, after setting my hand to the plough, to avoid trouble. And I began to see what I was turning my back upon, and how the devil was winning me back and putting the old enmity against God in my heart again. I couldn't stand that thought. I got out of bed and knelt down, and prayed that God would be merciful to me a sinner, and take not His

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Holy Spirit from me. I told Him if He wanted me to keep the Sabbath to show me so, and I would do it if I had to starve. I got up from my knees and took my Bible, and turned on the light to see what God would say to me. These were the words that came to me: 'But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.' That said to me that God wanted me to be done with disobedience, and do whatever He told me in His Word. So I told Him I would be obedient, and would not break His commandment. And now I want you both to pray for me, for I feel my own weakness. I shudder to think of what would have become of me if the Lord had not stretched out His hand to save me."

"Indeed, we will pray for you," said Mr. Barker. "I have been doing so already, for I could appreciate your position. But the Lord who has begun a good work in us will carry it forward till it is finished."

"For my part," said Mr. Summers, "I am very thankful that you have come to your decision in this way. I could see that the truth was getting the better of you intellectually, but that is a minor consideration. Unless the Spirit of God convicts us of truth, we cannot receive it as it is in Jesus. Now you will always feel that it was God Himself who persuaded you, and you will know how only others can be convinced."

"Yes," said Mr. Rogers, "I can see better than I could my need of divine strength. I felt self-sufficient, competent to decide for myself, but I see I needed God's help before I could decide aright. I must be led by the Holy Spirit if I am to be guided into truth. I stumble of myself, and am afraid to go forward by faith."

"You will learn good lessons out of this experience," said Mr. Summers. "This step has been the making of many a Christian. Before the test came, they regarded themselves as thorough Christians, and felt that no trial could daunt their faith, but they saw their own weakness when this Sabbath truth was revealed to them. Yet those who went forward, in fear and trembling rather than with the buoyant faith they once thought they had, found to their surprise that God's Word was reliable, that God Himself was the living God, that He did answer prayer, and that it was perfectly safe to actually trust His promise, even for daily bread. It was a new life for them when they got that experience, and God was a new God to them, and His Word a new and living Book. They would declare in after days that they wouldn't have lost the test of their faith for anything, for the test demonstrated that religion was real, and that the God of Abraham was still the same to those who believed Him today."



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"One thought that came up in my mind a good deal when I would think about the Sabbath," said Mr. Rogers, "was that if I should keep it, that would mean being cut off from all kinds of Christian work. However, I am going to be obedient to God, and leave the consequences, whatever they may be, with Him."

"That is the right attitude for the servant of God," answered Mr. Summers. "But you need not fear for a moment that because you are obeying the light that God has given you, you are going to be cut off from His service. Some who profess to be His servants may not want you to work with them, but there will still be plenty to do if you really desire to serve the Master."

"But what could I teach people?" asked Mr. Rogers. "That is another puzzle. If I teach them about the Sabbath, that may make them think it is hopeless for them to dream about becoming Christians."

"You must give to others what God has given you," answered Mr. Summers. "We are to make known the Gospel of salvation; that is our glorious commission; so we need never to be afraid to point out sin by the searching light of God's law, because we have a Gospel that is able to save unto the uttermost. The deeper the conviction of sin, the more thoroughly can the work of grace be done. Sabbath-keeping is not another gospel; but it does give point to the old Gospel when a man accepts the Lord's standard of righteousness with all his heart. When you know, by the law, what is sin, you have a clear testimony for the sinner; and while you show him his fault, you can at the same time tell of the blood that cleanseth from all sin."

"It seems to me," said Mr. Barker, "that the Sabbath-keeper is the very man to deal faithfully with the backslider. If you find a man going wrong, you know he has been neglecting prayer or Bible study, but it isn't always easy to make him see the sin of such a course. He thinks it's alright if he claims that he hasn't time for reading or private prayer. 'Haven't got the time,' is nearly always the excuse for neglected spiritual duties. Now the Lord has commanded men to take one-seventh of their time for worship, but when I kept Sunday I could never fasten a man down to that. Everybody you met had a different idea of how Sunday was meant to be observed. Some thought the day was intended for rest, and they took it largely in bed. Some claimed it was for recreation by way of games and excursions. Some thought if they went to church once, that was religion enough. And no-one could speak to them with authority,

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because if you quoted the fourth commandment everybody could answer that that spoke of the seventh day, and they regarded it as virtually obsolete. But now I am not afraid to tell people that there is a Sabbath, and that they cannot expect to prosper spiritually unless they honour it; I can tell them which hours are holy, and that it is a sin to desecrate them. And I can say, 'Thus saith the Lord,' when I talk to them."

"Yes," said Mr. Summers, "when a man is consistent with his own religious profession, he can always speak more positively to others. Sabbath-keeping means gain, not loss, of influence to the Christian worker. And that leads me to a thought which I do not believe we have touched on before. You know well that the Church of Rome is becoming very active again in this country, not only in our district, but in many others."

"Yes," said Mr. Rogers, "there's no doubt about that."

"Well," continued Mr. Summers, "who is going to stand up against the errors of Romish teaching and confront them with the Bible, and deliver men and women from the falsehoods which that church teaches? So-called Protestants are in most cases powerless to do this much-needed work, and I will tell you why.

"The only weapon that can be successfully employed against error," he went on to explain, "is the sword of the Spirit, 'which is the Word of God.' The way to meet Romish falsehood is to preach Bible truth. The Church of Rome recognizes this, and her aim has steadily been to destroy or discredit the Bible. Again and again her emissaries have publicly burned the Scriptures and prohibited the possession of them, and when this policy was impossible, they have sought to stand between the Bible and the people by saying that the Scriptures could only be understood when explained by the priest. The great Reformation of the sixteenth century was due to the spread of Bible truth among the people. You remember what the battle-cry of the Reformers was, don't you?"

"The Bible and the Bible only," replied Mr. Barker. "WyCliffe and Tyndale and Luther all made that their motto."

"Yes," replied Mr. Summers, "it was the study and teaching of the Bible that overthrew indulgences, and penances, and justification by works, and many other false doctrines. What weapon must we use if the old victory is to be repeated in these days of peril?"

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"It must be the Bible again," answered Mr. Rogers.

True enough," answered Mr. Summers, "but here arises a difficulty which I have seen myself again and again. Some Protestant minister or teacher sets out to expose the error of Romish teaching by comparing it with the Bible. He succeeds in showing its unscriptural character, but when he thinks he has put the adversary to shame, his opponent turns upon him and says: 'You talk about the Bible and the Bible only, and say that men must be guided by the Word and not by the church: yet you yourself reject the Word and obey the church by keeping Sunday, a day which is not sanctified by the Bible, but by the church. If you insist that the Bible and the Bible only is the proper rule for the Christian, then you must keep the seventh day holy, for that is the Sabbath of the Bible, and not the first. Unless you do so, you have no right to charge me with going contrary to the Bible and the following tradition.' "

"What does the Protestant say to that?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"He cannot say anything," was the reply. "He may try to get out of the dilemma, but he cannot so long as he keeps Sunday. For it is very manifest that there is no Bible authority for keeping Sunday holy. The utmost that can be claimed for Sunday is that the church, at some time or other, set it apart as a day to be observed. But if the church can make one innovation, contrary to the Scriptures, she can make another, and there is no drawing the line until you have accepted all the innovations of the church. Whenever the Protestant protests against one of these innovations, the Romanist turns upon him with the charge of inconsistency, and declares that he has no right to talk of 'the Bible and the Bible only' until he himself is faithful to his own standard. Thus the Protestant's mouth is stopped, and so far as he is concerned, there is nothing to prevent Rome from getting her own way and leading everybody back into darkness."

"Do the Roman Catholics really make use of that argument?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"Yes," replied Mr. Summers. "I have heard their public speakers use it several times, and it is frequently repeated in publications. It is even taught to the children in their catechisms. I have one here." Mr. Summers went to a bookshelf as he spoke, and took down a little book, "Listen to this:

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"Q. — By whom was it ( the Sabbath ) changed?

"A. — By the governors of the church. . . .

"Q. — How prove you that the church hath power to command feasts and holidays?

"A. — By the very act of changing the Sabbath into Sunday, which Protestants allow of; and therefore they fondly contradict themselves, by keeping Sunday strictly, and breaking most other feasts commanded by the same church.

"Q. — How prove you that?

"A. — Because by keeping Sunday they acknowledge the church's power to ordain feasts, and to command them under sin; and by not keeping the others by her commanded, they again deny in fact the same power."

"And here again is what a French bishop has said about the position of Protestants:

"It was the Catholic Church which, by the authority of Jesus Christ, transferred this rest to the Sunday in remembrance of the resurrection of our Lord. Thus the observance of Sunday by the Protestants is an homage they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the church."

"Now you can see that the Lord cannot permit Rome to put to silence in this way those who ought to be giving a faithful testimony to the truths for which Protestantism stands, and that is why He is raising up men now who cannot be put to silence by the taunt that they do not act out their own belief; men who, when Rome says to them: 'If you are Bible Christians, why don't you keep the seventh day holy?' will be able to reply: 'We do, as Bible Christians, keep the seventh day.' "

"What do you suppose the Romanist will say to people like that?" asked Mr. Barker.

"I don't know," answered Mr. Summers, "but I know the embarrassment will be on his side then. He will not be able to escape the fact that he is opposed to the Bible, for he cannot parry the fact by a sly thrust at his human opponent, and he will have to face the sword of the

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Spirit. Now you can see what I meant by my statement that the so-called Protestant is not prepared to stand today against the attacks of Rome. There is a weakness in his armour, and the enemy knows where it is. Only the Protestant who will be true to his principles, and will turn from the day appointed by the church to the day appointed by God Himself, will be able to stand up firmly for his faith, and oppose the onslaught of Rome with the old Protestant battle-cry: 'The Bible and the Bible only.' "

"Do you think there will be many," inquired Mr. Rogers, "who will turn from the Sunday and keep the Bible Sabbath?"

"Indeed," replied Mr. Summers, "there is at this present time a great reformation taking place on this point, and those who really love the Lord, when they come to understand the issues involved, are deciding at any cost to obey His commandment. When the standard of truth was uplifted in the sixteenth century, there was no lack of loyal response. At first many hesitated; the old influence was strong upon them, and it was no small thing to break from the traditions of centuries, but in spite of all, there were many who became obedient to the light God had given. And so it is proving again."

"I suppose there is nothing in the Bible about such a reformation?" inquired Mr. Rogers.

"Indeed, there is," replied Mr. Summers. "There are many Scriptures which show plainly that when the Lord comes, He will find a tested but faithful people, who have been cleansed and freed from every sin, and who are obedient to all of God's commandments. Here is one in the twelfth of Revelation, verse seventeen. Read it for us, Mr. Barker."

Mr. Barker turned up the passage, and read: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

"If you read the whole of this chapter," said Mr. Summers, "you will find that it deals with a long and bitter warfare on the part of the dragon, or Satan, and his agencies, against the woman, representing the church. The struggle is traced down to the end, and in the verse to which we have just listened, we find the remnant of the woman's seed described. The word 'remnant' means 'remainder,' and certainly indicates the last of the

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seed, or the individuals who compose the church of Christ in its closing stage. How does John speak of this remnant, Mr. Rogers?"

"They keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ," was the answer.

"Then they must be observers of the seventh-day Sabbath, must they not?" asked Mr. Summers. "For they could not be described as keeping the commandments of God unless they were. And notice, it is not until the remnant is reached that God's people are characterized by such obedience to His commandments. Cast your mind back over the history of the church during the last seventeen or eighteen hundred years. You can describe the saints as martyrs to their faith, and by many other honourable terms, but it would be impossible truthfully to say that they were distinctively keepers of God's commandments."

"I suppose they thought they were," said Mr. Barker.

"No doubt," answered Mr. Summers, "and if they had seen the light on the Sabbath they would have been as true to that as they were to other truths that God revealed to them; but very few of them saw it. Some did, and were obedient, but the great mass did not. So although the revelator, speaking of those faithful witnesses during the long period of papal supremacy, could say, as in Revelation 13:10: 'Here is the patience and the faith of the saints,' he could not then add, 'and they that keep the commandments of God.' There are many references in the book of Revelation to the saints and their experiences during the rule of the Papacy, but there are only two places where the saints are said to be keepers of the commandments of God, and both of those places refer to the church in the last days. One of those passages Mr. Barker has read to us, and now I will ask him to read the other. He will find it in the fourteenth chapter, verse twelve."

Mr. Barker took up his Bible, and read the following words: "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

"Thank you," said Mr. Summers. "You can be certain that these words apply to the people of God in their last earthly experience, for two verse on you read of the coming of the Lord to reap the harvest of the earth. So you see, when the Lord comes to gather His saints, those saints will be keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. In other words, they will be Sabbath-keeping Christians, and since this will

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be true of all the saints at the time spoken of by John, it is evident that a great reformation on the point of Sabbath-keeping must precede the advent of the Lord.

"There is another point which is worthy of careful attention in this fourteenth chapter of Revelation," continued Mr. Summers, "and that is that the Sabbath will evidently be the central point around which the last controversy of the church will move."

"Please tell us how you find that out," said Mr. Rogers eagerly.

"We have just read the twelfth verse," said Mr. Summers, "and that tells us that the saints who are prepared for the appearing of Christ will be distinguished by the fact that they keep all of God's commandments. But before John wrote that verse he had just described three messages, from their contents evidently the last given to the world. The first of these messages proclaims the everlasting Gospel, tells men that the hour of God's judgment is come, and calls upon all to worship the Creator. Now how, have we found, did the Creator appoint that He should be worshipped?"

"By remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy," answered Mr. Barker. "The Sabbath is the great memorial of creative power. In the fourth commandment the Lord Himself states His reason for ordaining the Sabbath: 'For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.'"

"Very well," said Mr. Summers; "then when we are bidden to worship the Creator, it certainly means that one thing, at least, which is required of us is to keep the Sabbath. That, then, is to be a prominent part of the preaching of the everlasting Gospel to every nation and kindred and tongue and people in the days when the hour of God's judgment is come. That is clear, isn't it?"

"It seems plain enough," said Mr. Rogers. "So the keeping of the Sabbath is to be presented before men, with a loud voice, in every nation."

"Yes, the prophecy certainly states that," replied Mr. Summers. "But that is not all. You will see that a second angel delivers a message, in which it is declared that Babylon is fallen. We haven't the time to go into

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this prophecy fully just now, to see what Babylon stands for, and what is meant by its fall, but you will recognize at once that Babylon stands for that spirit which leads men to lift themselves up and defy God. It is evident, then, that at this very time, when the message from heaven is calling men to exalt the Creator, there is a strong movement on the earth to exalt the creature. Now we have seen that men are to worship the Creator by honouring His Sabbath. How will Babylon, representing an organized rebellion on the part of the creature, conduct her campaign against God? Will it not be by demanding honour for itself in the observance of the spurious sabbath, which it has set up as a mark of its authority over the consciences of men?"

"There is certainly a strong movement at present to extend the observance of the Sunday," remarked Mr. Barker, "just at the very time when God is calling attention to the true Sabbath."

"Yes, that is the situation," said Mr. Summers. "If we refer to the prophecy of Daniel, which describes the career of the Papacy, we shall find that one of the principle objects of its attack is the law of God. Will you both turn to the seventh chapter of the book of Daniel? You will see that four great beasts are shown to the prophet, and that these represent the four great predominating empires of the world's history, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Out of the last, ten kingdoms arise, and among those grows up a kingdom different from all the others. In the course of the book of Daniel, the three first empires are named. But although the fourth is not named, there is no possible question as to which world-wide power it was that followed Greece. Everyone knows that it was the great Roman Empire. And just as certainly everyone may know what power it was that rose among the nations which divided the old Roman Empire. It was the Church of Rome. That church claimed and exercised all the power of the emperors, and even more. And history fully justifies the language in which Daniel foretells, by revelation, the course of the Church of Rome. Mr. Rogers, will you read us the twenty-fifth verse of this seventh of Daniel?"

Mr. Rogers accordingly read these words: "And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time."

"Now," said Mr. Summers, "the question is, Have these words been fulfilled? Every Protestant will say, Yes, and it is difficult to see how any



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reader of European history can say other wise. The Papacy has certainly spoken great words against the Most High, by the claims to divine honour which it has made, by the titles it has taken to itself, by the decree of papal infallibility, and by many other utterances. Again, it has worn out the saints of the Most High. We need only think of the tortures of the Inquisition, and we recognize at once the truth of this specification. Romanists may try their utmost to evade this charge, but their church stands unquestionably in the very first place among persecuting powers. A third point is, 'shall think to change times and laws.' The great words are spoken against the Most High; the saints who are worn out are the saints of the Most High; and the times and laws which the Papacy should think to change are, likewise, the times and laws of the Most High."

Mr. Summers continued: "I could read you many statements made by prominent men in the Church of Rome, showing that they glory in having changed the law of God, and boast of the act as an evidence and illustration of their power to bind the consciences of men. They openly avow that, in the exercise of their rightful authority, they have changed the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first, and they taunt Protestants with obeying a commandment for which there is no other foundation than the authority of the church. Unfortunately, many Protestants think the change is all right if they can trace it back to the early history of the church but we know what God thinks of the change by the kind of acts with which He classes it. In His eyes it ranks among blasphemies and persecutions. He gives the attempt to change His law as one of the distinctive crimes of the Papacy."

"That is a very mysterious sentence at the end of the twenty-fifth verse," said Mr. Rogers. "I wonder what it means: 'they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.'"

"It does sound mysterious," admitted Mr. Summers, "but the Bible itself gives the key to the mystery, and enables us to discover the meaning of the terms. Some day we may investigate this whole subject more fully, but I may say now that the period of time brought to view in these words is in the past. Consequently, the time has now come for Christians to reject the papal tampering with God's law, and go back to the commandments in their purity as God gave them. Christians today can rejoice in religious liberty. They are no longer under the fear of torture and death at the hands of the Papacy for worshipping according to the dictates of their own consciences; and along with this deliverance from the Papacy goes the duty to return to the times and laws of the Most

## FRIENDLY TALKS ON VITAL TOPICS

High. So, you see, in these days of peace it is high time there was a reformation, a turning from the papal rest-day to the Bible Sabbath."

"That seems reasonable from Daniel's words," said Mr. Barker. "The saints and the laws were only given into the hands of the Papacy for a limited time, and if that time has expired, the laws and the saints ought both to experience the results of the change."

"There will be a change," said Mr. Summers, "in the lives of all who really and truly are delivered from the Papacy and give God's Word its proper place. But there are unfortunately many who count themselves Protestants who are not standing solidly and squarely on the Protestant platform, and unless they do more faithful work in making the Bible, and the Bible only, the rule of their lives, they will surely slip back again into the clutches of the Papacy. For that power is regaining much of its old influence. Even under the name and guise of Protestantism the same old papal principles are re-asserting themselves. The churches are reaching out again after worldly power, and seeking to employ the arm of the State for the furtherance of religion. And the very point on which the Church and the State are re-making their fatal alliance is the same old point that distinguishes the Papacy, the change of the law of God. The churches, by their own supposed authority, have in the past put the first day of the week in the place of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, and now they are uniting in a call upon the State for legislation to compel the observance of their special rest-day, the first day of the week. Thus we are visibly nearing the crisis of which we read a few moments ago, in the fourteenth chapter of Revelation. Men are now being required to choose whether they will cast in their lot with God and His Word, or with fallen Babylon that lifts itself up against God. On the one hand, God calls for men to obey His commandment: on the other, men are demanding obedience to a human law which conflicts with the divine statutes. And this contest is to be waged at the very time when the hour of judgment is reached, and human destinies are being irrevocably decided, and that by the standard of the divine law in the judgment above. In view of this situation, a third message is sent forth to every living creature, declaring the solemn character of the crisis, and charging every soul, on pain of destruction, to reject the commandments of men and receive the commandments of God. Read the words in the fourteenth chapter of Revelation and the ninth verse: 'If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation.' "

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"What are the beast and the image?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"The beast is the symbol of the Papacy, which is dealt with at length in the thirteenth chapter," answered Mr. Summers. "The image of the beast is a duplicate of the Papacy which is to be formed in the last days. Men will be deceived into creating a duplicate of the Papacy, without understanding what they are really doing. When the image is formed, however, it soon shows itself alive, and begins to act and speak with the old papal spirit. These two, the Papacy and its double, have a certain mark which they seek to enforce, while God pronounces swift and terrible judgment on all who receive it. We have already seen by its own statement that that which the Papacy claims as its mark of authority is its change in the law of God. And today we actually see the professed Protestant churches uniting with the Church of Rome to compel by law the observance of Sunday. Without realizing it, Protestantism is becoming in this very way an image or copy of the Papacy, and the two are already beginning to act in unison. Here then, are the facts, too plain to be questioned. The point for every man to decide is, whether he will obey God or the beast. He can worship the Creator by keeping the sign of the Creator's power: he can worship the Papacy by keeping the Sunday which is the sign of its boasted authority. Every man must choose between the seal of God and the mark of the beast.

"But it is late, and we must close. I cannot tell you how glad I am that you have both decided to cast your lot on the side of God's commandments. You will have tribulation in the world, and will probably have to face the wrath of the dragon, but you will not have to drink the wine of the wrath of God. The Sabbath brings only blessing from Him. But you can see what I meant by saying that the Sabbath would be the subject of the last great controversy. The Bible Sabbath stands for the principles of heaven, giving to God and man their proper place. The Sunday institution stands for the principles of the Papacy, perverting the relation between the creature and the Creator. It will be as true of the final issue between the Sabbath and the Sunday, in view of all that lies back of both, as it ever was in the history of human probation, that there is set before men for them to choose, life and death, blessing and cursing. May it be our privilege to lead many to choose the better portion!"

"Amen," said Mr. Barker.

**The End.**