

Signs of the Times

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SIGNS of the TIMES

An examination of the prophecies of 1 Timothy 4, and 2 Timothy 3, concerning the closing days of the dispensation of the Mystery.

by

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The Apostle of the Reconciliation
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Just and the Justifier
In Heavenly Places

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SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Signs of the Times

1

`It is not for you to know the times or the seasons' (Acts 1:7).

The sure word of prophecy, is to the believer, something so vitally linked with the truth of Scripture, and the faithfulness, sovereignty and omniscience of the Almighty, that it cannot be thrust aside, misapplied, or manipulated to suit private interpretations, but must ever be the subject of reverent enquiry, and wondrous expectancy. The prophet Isaiah to quote but one O.T. writer uses this fact of prophetic pre-vision as an antidote to the snare of idolatry into which Israel was at that time so prone to fall, and also employs it as a positive encouragement to faith.

`Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods' (Isa. 41:21-23; see also 43:9; 44:7,25,26; 46:10; 48:5).

Those who have learned to distinguish between prophetic fulfilment and the present parenthetical interposition of the dispensation of the mystery, do not look at the present cavalcade of `wars and rumours of wars', or the recurrence of `famines, pestilences and earthquakes' as `fulfilments' of prophecy, they see clearly that when Israel became Lo-ammi `not my people' (Hosea 1:9), the prophetic clock stopped (Acts 28:28), and will not go again until the present parenthetical dispensation is completed. That is one attitude, an attitude of heart and mind that honours both the Wisdom of God in making known the secret purpose of His will consequent upon Israel's failure, and the literal and sure fulfilment of the Word of Prophecy when the time comes for Israel's awakening, conversion, restoration and blessing.

Speaking generally concerning prophetic interpretation, whether to do with Israel or to do with the prophetic utterances of 1 Timothy 4 or 2 Timothy 3 and 4 (which comprehend practically all that is prophetic in the prison epistles), there are two main principles to remember.

1. *The time, season, day and hour of prophetic fulfilment is hid.*

`... It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power' (Acts 1:7).

`But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only' (Matt. 24:36).

`Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh' (Matt. 25:13).

2. *While the day and the hour is unknown, there are `signs' that the believer should `discern'.*

`... When it is evening, ye say, it will be fair weather: for the sky is red ... ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?' (Matt. 16:2,3).

‘Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it (He) is near, even at the doors’ (Matt. 24:32,33).

Let us, in this introductory article, become a little better acquainted with these two complementary principles.

‘Which the Father hath put in His own power’.

This passage is translated in the R.V. ‘Which the Father hath set within His own authority’, and as a marginal reading adds ‘or appointed by’ for the word ‘set’. Some interpret this passage to mean, that the Father hath appointed the times or seasons by His own power, but others see that the words mean that the question of times and seasons have been placed by the Father within His own jurisdiction or authority.

The word translated ‘power’ in Acts 1:7 is the Greek *exousia*. ‘Power’, should be reserved for the translation of *dunamis* as in Acts 1:8, the use of the same word for both Greek words is confusing. The apostles received *power*, but the Father retained *authority*. *Dunamis* is derived from ‘ability’, but *exousia* is derived from ‘being’. For examples taken from the A.V. where *exousia* is translated ‘authority’, see, Matthew 7:29; 21:23; Acts 9:14; 1 Corinthians 15:24. The verb *tithemi* ‘put’ in Acts 1:7 of the A.V. means literally ‘to place’. It is used in Acts some twenty-three times, and is translated ‘laid’, ‘whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple’ (Acts 3:2, and six other occasions). The other passages in the Acts where *tithemi* is translated ‘to put’, refer to ‘prison’ (Acts 4:3; 5:18,25; 12:4). Other translations in the Acts are ‘to make’; ‘to conceive’; ‘to purpose’; ‘to give’ as counsel. In the epistles it is rendered in addition to these, by such words as ‘to set’; ‘to commit’; ‘to appoint’ and ‘to ordain’. The idea of authority is evident in every reference. The phrase ‘in His own authority’ can be interpreted in the light of the same Greek words found in Acts 5:4 ‘was it not in thine own power?’ or as Moffatt freely renders it ‘and even after the sale, was the money not yours to do as you pleased about it?’ Not only has the Father complete jurisdiction over ‘times and seasons’ but the specific ‘day and hour’ when the Son of Man shall come is not even known by ‘the angels’ although they may ‘desire to look into these things’. In Mark 13:32 we have a fuller and more comprehensive statement :

‘But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father’.

Even after the resurrection, the Son is represented as seated at the right hand on high ‘henceforth expecting’, so completely have times, seasons, days and hours been reserved to the authority of the Father. In the face of such statements, all attempts to calculate, forecast or otherwise anticipate ‘the day and the hour’ are alike foredoomed to failure and contrary to Scripture. The reader may very well repudiate the attempts that have been made to arrive at the date of the Second Coming by ‘Pyramid Inches’, he may, moreover, have acquaintance with such an abortive attempt as that of Dimpleby, who by the Zodiacal Circle, the Eclipse Cycle, and the Solar Cycle, ‘proved’ that the Times of the Gentiles ended in 1898^{1/4} and that the Millennium started in 1928^{1/4}, a colossal set of calculations which only stand today as the monument to his misdirected energies.

Another basis for calculation, and one that claims the attention of the believer in the Bible as the book wherein is unveiled the purpose of the ages, is that which sees both in the opening chapters of Genesis, and in subsequent types and shadows, the warrant to believe that the present age will last 6000 years. There is in this view much to be commended, the danger lies in yielding to the temptation by the use of analogy to forecast dates. We have one such attempt open before us, as we write. In this computation, the days that are to come will be as it was in the days of Noah, when the Son of Man is revealed (Luke 17:26-30) and these days are dated A.D. 1938-77, the interpretation of the ‘revealing’ of the Son of Man is given as that Christ is revealing Himself to His people for 40 years before the fall of Mystic Babylon in A.D. 1978. ‘With the Munich crisis in 1938’ says the writer, ‘we entered upon the last forty years of the Time of the End (Dan. 12:9)’.

When we examine the chronology of this writer, we discover that he dates the going forth of the commandment (Dan. 9:23) from Darius’ first year (Dan. 9:1), whereas, the *Companion Bible* dates the going forth of the commandment from the 20th year of Artaxerxes (see Neh. 2:1). The date of Artaxerxes is given in the *Companion Bible* as 454 B.C., and the date of Darius is given by the writer whose work we are examining as 483 B.C., a discrepancy of 29 years, fully accounted for in Scripture, as the 483 years reach to the ‘cutting off’ of the Messiah,

whereas the calculations before us make the 483 years end at the birth of the Messiah. He then adds another 30 years to the commencement of the Lord's ministry, and so arrives at his conclusion that the age will end at the 6000th year from Adam in A.D. 1977. It certainly would have been awkward to have made the 6000 years end 30 years earlier, namely in 1947, for that would have written Ichabod* across the whole attempt.

We write with no unsympathetic spirit of this patient endeavour to piece together the pattern of the ages, but taking our stand with the Scriptures already quoted, can only feel sorry that another abortive attempt should be made by a confessed child of God. The recognition that the day and the hour of the Lord's return is hidden with intention by the Lord, by no means forbids an intelligent reading both of the Scriptures and of the signs of the times. These are as clearly indicated in Matthew 24:32,33,38 and 39, as the attempt to compute the date is forbidden in Matthew 24:36. In our next article we will examine these 'signs of the times' more carefully.

2

The Valley of Dry Bones (Ezek. 37)

We have given our reasons, both from the positive statements of Scripture, and by the sad attempts of believers, for refusing to accept, or to attempt for ourselves, any computation of times, ages, analogies, astronomical data and the like, that would 'prove' that the Second Coming of Christ must take place on any specified date. We do not, however, minimize either the importance of that great event, or set aside those passages of Scripture which encourage a survey of the signs of the times. The children of Issachar, are commended in the book of the Chronicles, for they were men 'that had understanding of the times' and consequently knew 'what Israel ought to do' (1 Chron. 12:32). True understanding of the times, therefore, rather than leading to a dreamy inefficiency, does the very reverse. Only those who have an understanding of the times can know what should or should not be done. The Saviour rebuked the men of His generation because they were not able to discern the signs of the times, but the context shows that foretelling the date of prophetic fulfilment was not implied. Deductions as to the weather were drawn from the character of the sky. The words of our Lord, in Matthew 16:2,3, find an echo in the proverbial rhyme :

'A red sky at night, is a shepherd's delight,
But a red sky in the morning is a shepherd's warning'.

The challenge of the Lord is that these men 'discerned' the face of the sky, but were unable to discern the signs of the times. This 'discernment' is the exercise of the judgment, with especial regard to 'things that differ'. *Diakrino* the Greek word so translated implies differences (Acts 15:9; Jude 22), and a balancing of pros and cons before coming to a conclusion, hence, *diakrino* is also rendered 'doubt' and 'waver' (Rom. 14:1; Matt. 21:21; Jas. 1:6). There is therefore nothing blind, fanatic or mystic about the discerning of the signs of the times but a careful balancing of judgment before a conclusion is reached.

Kairos. This word, in spite of the opinion of Meyer and Alford, that it 'involves the idea of transitoriness' is shown by Bloomfield to be far more specific. *Kairos* is derived (as Lennech says) from *kao* and means 'a point', and as applied to time 'a point of time'; Plato defines *kairos* as 'the acme of *chronos*'.

In Matthew 24, when the Lord would direct the attention of the disciples to the signs of the times that would herald His Second Coming, He refers not to the observation of the weather, but to something akin, their observations of nature that made them know 'that summer is nigh'. When the Lord said 'Now learn a parable from the fig tree', He meant, not that He was going to give them a parable, but that the growth of the fig tree was an ever present parable which they were admonished to consider. The rise of the sap, the bursting of the fresh young leaves, all declare with one voice that 'summer' is nigh. So likewise, the concurrence of all the events already indicated in Matthew 24:1-33, would be sufficient evidence that 'He is near, even at the doors'.

Luke not only records this parable of the fig tree, but because he deals also with the times of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24-29), speaks of the fig tree, and 'all the trees'. The Fig, Vine and Olive trees are used in the Scriptures quite

*See 1 Samuel 4:21.

frequently as types of Israel, and there is much to favour the conception that these three trees symbolize three phases of Israel's position.

The Fig tree sets forth Israel's position as a nation (Matt. 21:19,20).

The Vine indicates its spiritual privileges (Isa. 5).

The Olive Israel's religious privileges (Rom. 11).

In the parable of Jotham (Judg. 9:8-15), the olive, the fig, and the vine are successively invited to 'reign' but refuse, the offer then being made to the bramble, which accepts on conditions. This refers to Abimelech who in his turn is a type of Antichrist.

The parable of Luke 21:29, 'Behold the fig tree, and all the trees' is a plain indication that when we see Israel and the nations moving toward the position and relationship spoken of beforehand in prophecy our 'redemption draweth nigh'. No one, whatever his belief or his unbelief, can close his eyes to the significant movements that are taking place in Palestine today. None of these movements are fulfilments of any specific prophecy; this awaits the close of the dispensation of the Mystery and the end of the times of the Gentiles, but it is as absurd as it is unnecessary to believe that no preparatory work will be done among Israel and the nations before the prophetic clock strikes once more - such a lack of preparation would demand at the time of the end a stupendous miracle for which there is no warrant.

Since writing these words, the world has been moved by the epoch making announcement at Pentecost 1948, that 'Israel' were once more to be considered a 'Nation'.

This does not mean that their 'lo-ammi' condition has ended, it does not mean that the prophetic clock has recommenced ticking, but it does mean that the most decisive movement of the centuries has taken place before our eyes, and for weal or for woe^{*}, the Rubicon has been crossed. For Israel there can be no looking back.

This is now the attitude of the Press, as the following extracts will show :

Tuesday, July 13, 1948

But whatever direction future talks may take, they will get nowhere until the two fundamental issues have been settled. First, it must be brought home to the Arabs that a Jewish State in the Middle East is now a reality and that it has come to stay.

The second fundamental issue is that of immigration. If Israel is to be sovereign, her immigration cannot be restricted.

The Scriptures make it clear, that after a period of separation and negation, Israel shall 'return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days' (Hos. 3:5).

Jeremiah records the promise of the Lord: 'He that scattered Israel, will gather him' (Jer. 31:10). During the period of Israel's scattering, while they are called *Lo-ammi* 'not My people', the dispensation of the mystery obtains and the kingdom and its hopes are in abeyance. This fact however does not alter other facts; all truth must be held without bias or partiality.

Gentile succession from Nebuchadnezzar still continues, although owing to the non-repentance of Israel at the first advent, the kingdoms represented by the legs (see Dan.2:33) have entered into a phase parallel with the 'mystery of the kingdom of Heaven'. Nations go about their ways, rise and fall, quite independently of the Church of the mystery, and scattered and blinded Israel are still with us, waiting indeed as Hosea 3 declares 'without a king and without a prince'. If at the time of the end there is to be an investment^{*} of Jerusalem by the armies of the Gentiles, then of necessity there must be inhabitants of that city; and if the inhabitants therein invested are of the stock of Israel, then of necessity, during the present period, there must have been movements among the Jewish

* 'for weal or for woe' - for better or for worse.

* besieging or beleaguerment

people, even though promoted by unbelief in their true Messiah. To borrow a figure from the theatre; the play does not begin until the curtain rises, but if there were no work being done behind the curtain in preparation, there would be no play. So, until Israel occupy their position prophetic times will not have re-commenced, but if they are to commence, then much preparation must be going on *here and now*, and these prefatory preparations constitute legitimate 'signs of the times' that may be observed even today. Among such initial preparations going on at the present moment, and before our eyes is the first movement described in the vision of Ezekiel 37. A valley of dry bones, fitly describes Israel's *present* condition, and if it describes Israel's *present* condition, then it is a sign of the times. These bones are said to be 'very dry', and this same word appears in Isaiah 40 where we read 'The grass withereth' (Isa. 40:7,8). In Ezekiel the prophet is not only asked a question but is given a command 'Prophesy upon these bones' (Ezek. 37:4). In the vision we see, in fulfilment of the LORD's promise, a series of movements resulting in the complete restoration of the whole house of Israel. Most of the prophecy lies beyond the bounds of the present dispensation, but the opening movement is going on before our eyes.

'... There was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone' (Ezek. 37:7).

Once again there is a link with Isaiah 40, for the word translated 'noise', is the Hebrew *qol* 'voice', which occurs in Isaiah 40:3 and 6. The combination of a 'voice' or 'noise' and a 'shaking' is found elsewhere in Ezekiel. In the prophecy against Tyre, the prophet says:

'... Shall not the isles *shake* at the *sound* of thy fall?' (Ezek. 26:15).

There is a day of 'shaking' to come, as Haggai 2:6,21 and Hebrews 12:26-28 testify, and the movements among the nations, and the upheavals that usher in the time of the end, will be used by the Lord to gather the dry dead bones of Israel to the land of promise. Israel do not yet 'live', the Spirit has not yet breathed upon the slain, but the movement in Jewry and in Palestine is most certainly the movement indicated in Ezekiel 37:7. To change the figure and revert to the parables of Matthew 24 and Luke 21, there is a most definite sign of movement manifesting itself in the Fig Tree and all the trees. The stage is being set.

We conclude this article with an extract from *The Morning Star*, Editor John A. Verleur, Rt. 1, Allendale, New Jersey. This extract so coincides with what we have already written for this series, that we felt the reader would value the testimony of another witness:

"His blood be upon us, and on our children".

'Such was the awful cry of frenzied Jewry in sending the Messiah to the Cross (Matt. 27:25). Now long before Sinai, God's unwritten law read, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. 9:6). But there is a difference between shedding blood and shedding blood! The difference is made plain in Deuteronomy 19:5:

"As when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbour, *that he die*; he shall flee unto one of those cities, and live".

'Why? The nearest kin to the man must act at once as the blood avenger and kill him. The law of Genesis 9:6 has never been repealed. Now the slayer acted unintentionally. That did not prevent the losing of his home and property, he had to flee to the nearest city of refuge (Num. 35:15; Exod. 21:12,13; Deut. 19:1-13 - please consult your Bible!) until the death of the High Priest.

'Who is the manslayer? The Jew ignorantly slew the Lord Jesus. In proof whereof we quote the familiar passage, "Father, forgive *them*; for *they* know not what *they* do" (Luke 23:34). Also Acts 3:17, "And now, *brethren*, I wot that through *ignorance* ye did it, as did also your rulers". And 1 Corinthians 2:8, "Which none of the princes of this world knew: *for had they known it*, they would *not* have crucified the Lord of Glory". And 1 Timothy 1:13, "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it *ignorantly* in unbelief". Paul, clearly a type of Israel in his conversion, looks back at his former life and under inspiration records that his persecuting was done unintentionally and in ignorance. The Bible (?) teacher and or teachers (?) who "make" Paul the chief of sinners should be honest in their research. *Israel is the manslayer*. Under law, life for life, eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth was required. Significantly, the manslayer could employ only three implements to

receive the needed clemency: wood, stone or iron. Are not the cross, its cruel nails, its heavy beam of wood and Stephen's stoning remarkable fulfilments?

`The Jew an Alien. But the manslayer lost his home. So Israel have been living in borrowed homes and have been made temporary citizens of the world.

`Matthew 24:16, Israel's flight from Anti-Christ. When ye see, our Lord says, the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, then do two things: start *running* and start *counting*. Daniel's 1290 days will then be counted as we count our "days before Christmas". The pious Israelite will count, 1289, 1288, 1287 ... 653, 652 ... 40, 39, 38 ... 15, 14 ... 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2 ... Oh, God, only one more day, "Give us this day our daily bread ... deliver us from the evil one ... for Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory FOREVER. AMEN". Then, friends, the so-called Lord's Prayer will be *the prayer*'.

3

`The Spirit speaketh expressly' (1 Tim. 4:1).

We use the figure of the setting of a stage behind the scenes, before the actual rise of the curtain, to illustrate the difference between those signs of the times which are *preparatory* to the recommencement of prophetic fulfilment and the actual resumption by God of the things that pertain to Israel at the time of the end. Had it been our intention to survey these preparatory signs more fully, what an amount of suggestive lines of teaching we find ready to our hand. The changes in the climate of Palestine which have been noted of late is one of the necessary preparatory signs. Another sign of the times is the shrinking of the world: the aeroplane, the wireless, and the television rendering *'splendid isolation'* no longer a possibility to any country; and making the world ready for the last great dictator. The possibility of atomic warfare gives point to the cry *'Who is able to make war with him?'* (Rev. 13:4). There have been many conjectures on the part of commentators as to how the *'image'* of the Beast could be made visible to all that dwell on the earth, or how this image could *'speak'*, and so appear to demonstrate that resurrection from the dead had been achieved. The projecting of the *'image'* of any ruler, and the authentic sound of his voice, is now not only possible but actual by the use of television. These and other fascinating matters, however, we leave, in order that we may redeem the time and consider what prophetic statements must be fulfilled before the close of the dispensation of the mystery.

It will be both useless and unbelieving for any one who has perceived the unique character of the *'Mystery'* to take to themselves the prophetic utterances either of the O.T. or of the Gospels and the Revelation. The only valid prophecies that fall within the sphere of the present dispensation are those found in Paul's epistles written since Acts 28:28. We know, from Ephesians 6:13 that there awaits the believer *'the evil day'* for which the whole armour of God has been provided; but for specific prophecies we must turn to the epistles to Timothy, for these are the only epistles written after Acts 28, that contain prophecies that pertain to the Church today.

The first great prophetic utterance of the apostle after Acts 28 is found in the first epistle to Timothy, chapter 4, which opens with the words *'Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith'*. It would be possible, of course, to take up these words and commence the study of this prophetic warning straight away, but to do so would be to ignore one of the first principles of all Scripture interpretation, namely, the necessity of viewing any passage in the light of the context. Again, this principle may be interpreted in a very limited way and lead only to an examination of the verses immediately surrounding the passage, or, it can be interpreted generously, endeavouring to see every passage of an epistle as related to the epistle as a whole. This, as the reader well knows, is our habit and we have never regretted the time spent on such an inquiry. It may not be necessary to set out the structure of this epistle in minute detail, but the following outline surely reveals two things: the intended relation of the apostasy of the latter times with the *'Mystery of Godliness'*, and the fact that these two subjects are at the very heart of the epistle.

1 Timothy.

A 1:1,2 Salutation.

- B 1:3-20 `Teach no other doctrine' *Hetero didaskaleo* (3)
 `The King, incorruptible, invisible' (17)
 `Shipwreck' (19).
- C 2:1-7 The salvation of all men (4).
 D 2:8 to 3:15- These things write I (3:14).
 E 3:-15,16 The MYSTERY. Angels.
 4:1-8 The APOSTASY. Demons.
- C 4:9-12 The Saviour of all men (10).
 D 4:13 to 6:2 These things teach (6:2).
- B 6:3-20 `Teach otherwise' *Hetero didaskaleo*. (3).
 `The King, immortal, unseen' (15,16).
 `Drowning' (9).
- A 6:21 Salutations

It would take us too far from our immediate subject either to enter into the controversy that has arisen over the true reading of 1 Timothy 3:16, or to attempt an exposition of that verse, this has been done with some attempt at thoroughness in Volume 32 of *The Berean Expositor*, pages 212-218*. All that we will do here is to give two short extracts from that article and pass on to chapter four.

`A question now arises from the last clause of verse 15. Is the *church* "the pillar and ground of the truth"? If we use the word "church" in its most spiritual meaning, we shall find no basis in Scripture for such an important doctrine. The case before us, however, is most certainly not "*the Church*" but "*a church*", a church wherein there are bishops and deacons; in other words, a local assembly, and surely it is beyond all argument that the truth does not rest upon any such church as its pillar and ground. The reader will observe that in the structure, chapter 3:15 is divided between D and E, and that the latter part of verse 15 belongs to verse 16. There is no definite article before the word "pillar", and a consistent translation is as follows. Having finished what he had to say about the officers of the church and Timothy's behaviour, he turns to the great subject of the mystery of godliness with the words:

A pillar and ground of truth and confessedly great is the mystery of godliness.

Here the teaching is that whatever or whoever the mystery of godliness shall prove to be, it or He, is the pillar and ground of truth. The mystery of godliness is then explained as "God manifest in the flesh", and He, we know, is a sure and tried Foundation'.

As to the reading of the Greek at 1 Timothy 3:16, we give the following summary:

`The reading of 1 Timothy 3:16, "God was manifest in the flesh" is witnessed by 289 manuscripts, by 3 versions and by upwards of 20 Greek Fathers. Moreover, the text of the R.V. does not make grammatical Greek. The relative pronoun *hos* should agree with its antecedent. *Musterion* is neuter. Bloomfield in his Synoptica says "*hos ephanerothe* is not Greek". We would conclude this study, with the calculated affirmation of our belief that the original reading of 1 Timothy 3:16 is, "GOD was manifest in the flesh" and, like Thomas of old, we bow in this Presence and say "My Lord, and my God" and, like Philip, we say "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us".

The focal point of the epistle is this `Mystery of Godliness', and its relation to the epistle as a whole can be seen if we eliminate all detail and observe the following features:

- A 1:17 The King of the ages. INVISIBLE.
 B 3:16 God manifest in the flesh. SEEN.
 A 6:16 The King of kings. UNSEEN.

The apostasy of the last days of this dispensation is not a departure from faith in general, but from the particular and vital doctrine which the structure places central `God manifest in the flesh'.

The words that introduce this prophecy of 1 Timothy 4:1 have an air of solemnity about them, `Now the Spirit speaketh expressly'. A quotation introduced by the formula `it is written', commands attention and obedience, but

*Which also includes a more complete structure of 1 Timothy.

here, the writer of the epistle seems to imply that the Holy Spirit had broken the silence as He did in Acts 13:2, or as the `voice', broke in upon Peter's vision, Acts 10:13. Some idea of the exactness implied by the adverb *rhotos* `expressly', can be gathered from the fact that in Mathematics, *rhotos* was used to specify an exact quantity as opposed to a *surd*, which indicates a quantity not capable of being expressed in rational numbers. We are going to read that in the latter times there will not only be an `apostasy' which, however sad to contemplate, is not beyond belief, but that this apostasy from the faith is vitally connected with seducing SPIRITS, doctrines of DEMONS, the forbidding of MARRIAGE, the abstention from MEATS, with OLD WIVES FABLES, and BODILY EXERCISE. Such a collection of strange items seems but remotely connected with `the faith' and, therefore, to prevent anyone from treating this warning lightly, we are told that the Spirit spoke `expressly'.

This departure from the faith will have a near and a more remote consequence. The near consequence is the state of affairs depicted in 2 Timothy 3 and 4 (when the `perilous times' will have come), and will at the same time prepare the way for the greater apostasy of 2 Thessalonians 2 which belongs to the dispensation that follows upon the close of the present one. We shall see that the apostasy of 1 Timothy 4 is an incipient opposition to the Mystery of Godliness (1 Tim. 3:15,16), an opposition which reaches its fulness in the manifestation of the man of sin.

These introductory notes, we trust, make the examination of the signs of the times an imperative obligation upon all, who, like the men of Issachar, would know what the Lord's people ought to do.

4

Times and Seasons.

The times, which are the subject of the Spirit's `express' words in 1 Timothy 4:1, are `the latter times'. In 2 Timothy 3:1 they are called `the last days', and before we examine the characteristics of these closing times, let us attempt to discriminate between the expressions employed to indicate these `times'.

En husterois kairois, are the words translated `in the latter times'. *En eschatais hemerais*, are the words translated `in the last days'. We can hardly think that different words are used merely for the sake of variety, and will not assume that they mean one and the same thing before examining the meaning and usage of the terms employed. First, let us consider the words translated `latter' and `last'. `Last' is a contracted form of `latest' and indicates the utmost or extreme limit of the time under review. `Latter' is a variant of `later', and while still dealing with the time of the end is not so extreme, the two words stand related as `later', `latest'. The English words therefore suggest that 1 Timothy 4:1 is the herald of 2 Timothy 3. What testimony do the Greek words give?

Husteros. The primary significance of this word is `want' or `deficiency' and is only applied to time in a figurative way. We will give one example of the various forms, that occur in the N.T.

Hustereo, `come short' (Rom. 3:23).

Husterema, `that which is behind' (Col. 1:24).

Husteresis, `not that I speak in respect of want' (Phil. 4:11).

Husteron, `afterward it yieldeth' (Heb. 12:11).

These `after times' might refer to the period immediately following the apostle's day; they can also refer to the remaining and closing days of the present dispensation. We will not examine the characteristics of the apostasy detailed in 1 Timothy 4:1-5, until we complete our examination of the time period mentioned in these two epistles.

The word *Kairos*, translated `times' in 1 Timothy 4:1, must be given attention. *Chronos* indicates duration, `the time in which anything is done', whereas *kairos* indicates the opportune moment, the `season' at which a thing SHOULD BE done (see Dr. E. W. Bullinger's Lexicon Concordance). So in Philippians 4:10 *akaireomai* is `lack of opportunity', not merely lack of time, also *eukairos* in 2 Timothy 4:2 `in season' or opportunely, even as `out of season' is inopportune. While the A.V. renders *kairos* `season' fifteen times, it employs the broader word `time' in the majority of cases. Confining ourselves to the Pastoral epistles we find *kairos* occurring seven times as follows:

- | | |
|---------------|---------------------------|
| A 1 Tim. 2:6. | A testimony in due time. |
| B 1 Tim. 4:1. | Apostasy in latter times. |

- C 1 Tim. 6:15. King of kings. His times.
 D 2 Tim. 3:1. Perilous times.
 B 2 Tim. 4:3. Apostasy, the time will come.
 C 2 Tim. 4:8. Crown. My time.
 A Tit. 1:3. A manifestation in due time.

We shall discover as we proceed that the apostasy of 1 Timothy 4 prepares the way for the perilous times of 2 Timothy 3 and 4, but as an antidote to depression we observe that God also has His seasons for making known His truth and vindicating both His Saints and His Son. The cryptic prophetic phrase 'a time, and times, and half a time' (Rev. 12:14) uses this word *kairos*, which - referring as it does to the last three years and a half of the final 'seven' of Daniel 9 - suggests at least that in the 'after times' of 1 Timothy 4:1, we may expect something similar in character even if different in dispensation.

Turning to 2 Timothy we observe that in chapter 3:1 we have two time notes, namely 'the last days', and 'perilous times'. *Eschatos*, translated 'last', has reference to the furthest edge, border or extreme. It can mean the highest (*summus*), the lowest (*imus*), or the meanest (*extremus*). It will be seen therefore that the *husteros* seasons of 1 Timothy 4 are the prelude to the perilous extremity of the seasons of 2 Timothy 3, and that the factors that make up the apostasy of the former period find their fruition in the practices and doctrines of the last days.

Throughout the N.T. there are statements that point to the evil character of that which comes 'last' (Luke 11:26; 1 Cor. 4:9; Jas. 5:3; 2 Pet. 2:20; 3:3; 1 John 2:18 and Jude 18). In 2 Timothy 3:1 the apostle does not say 'the last times' but the last days. The word *Hemera* primarily means that period of time during which the sun is above the horizon (Matt. 20:6,12); a period of twelve hours (John 11:9), a period contrasted with night, with its darkness and with the inability to do any more work (John 9:4). It also stands for the complete period of twenty-four hours (Mark 9:2); and then to any particular period of time, as 'the days of Herod', 'the days of Noah', 'the last day', 'the day of judgment'. Two very important and contrasted periods are 'man's day' (A.V.) 'man's judgment' (1 Cor. 4:3); and 'The Lord's day' (Rev. 1:10). The reference in 2 Timothy 3:1 is to the extreme verge of man's day, which must give place to the Day of the Lord.

The seven references to 'the last day' in John's Gospel, the one reference in 2 Timothy 3:1 and the one in James 5:3, differ from the two references, Hebrews 1:2 and 2 Peter 3:3, in that these last have a more extended form, reading 'the last of the days'. The period spoken of in Hebrews 1:2 is not 'the last day' for that is still future, but 'the last of the days', namely, the prophetic periods marked off in the Scriptures. From these assembled features we gather that Paul speaks in 2 Timothy 3:1, not concerning the last of the days spoken of by the O.T. Prophets, nor of the last day of resurrection, nor the last hour of Antichrist's dominion, but the last days of the dispensation to which he, Paul the Prisoner of the Lord, ministered; in other words *the closing days in which we live*. These days are called 'perilous'. This is the first characteristic of the closing days that the apostle gives us.

Chalepos the word translated 'perilous' is a word to give us pause. It has an affinity with the Hebrew *caleph*, which is translated axes, hammers and the like, and implies some measure of violence and force. The Greek word is employed to describe the mental condition of the men possessed with 'devils', who were 'exceeding fierce' (Matt. 8:28), and this gives some idea of the character of the closing days of this dispensation. It is so important that we should be aware of the character of the evil days that lie just ahead of us, that we give a condensed quotation from Liddell and Scott, of a further definition and examples of the word translated 'perilous'.

'*Chalepos* is used of things hard to bear, sore, severe, grievous; dangerous as the sea; of pathways that are rough, rugged and steep. When used of persons, it indicates that they are hostile, angry, cruel and stern; bitter as enemies; troublesome as neighbours and ill tempered generally'.

These references, added to that of Matthew 8:28, are a trumpet call to vigilance, to the putting on the whole armour of God, to single eyed service, and to unswerving, uncorrupted loyalty.

The last reference that we must consider under this heading of 'times' is that of 2 Timothy 4:3, 'the time will come'. Again we must postpone an examination of the things that are to be done in this coming time, in order to complete our examination of the time itself. Here once again we have the word *kairos*, 'season', and there seems to be an intentional play upon the word as will be seen by the following translation:

Preach the word; be instant *in season*, out of *season* ... for the *season* will come ... the *season* for my departure is at hand (2 Tim. 4:2,3,6).

We do well to remember in preaching the Word in these perilous times, that if we wait for 'a convenient season' we shall wait too long. In the estimate of many, it will always be inopportune, but those who have received the good deposit as a sacred trust, know that the preaching of the Truth of the Mystery, however much it may be refused and rejected, is indeed and in truth 'A Word in Season'.

Summing up what we have seen concerning 'the times' we perceive that in after times, which can refer to the days immediately following the apostle's own times, as well as later, there will be an apostasy from the faith, which in turn will lead to the perilous times that will be the characteristic of the extreme end of this dispensation. The preaching of the Word, however it be attacked or ignored, must be maintained until the course is finished. At one end of the story is a departure from the faith and at the other, the example of one who kept the faith (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 4:7). May we as sedulously avoid the one, even as we seek to emulate the other.

5

The Apostasy (1 Tim. 4:1).

Having considered the terms used by the apostle to indicate the different 'times', namely, 'the after seasons', 'the days at the extreme verge' and the 'perilous' character of these closing days we now retrace our steps in order to discover the characteristics of the apostasy prophesied, so that being warned by the faithful Word and so knowing the times, we may, like the children of Issachar know what we ought to do. The first item that calls for attention is the word 'now' (Greek *de*) with which 1 Timothy 4 opens. In English 'now' indicates either the present time, and would translate the Greek *nun*, or it is used without reference to time, 'to form a connection between a preceding and a subsequent proposition, or to introduce an inference or an explanation of that which precedes'. This would be the translation of the Greek connective *de*, 'always implying antithesis, however concealed'. The antithesis of 1 Timothy 4:1 is the Mystery of Godliness of 1 Timothy 3:16; and inasmuch as this great revelation is 'a pillar and ground of truth and confessedly great', the departure from the truth of which the Spirit expressly warns us, must be in essence a departure in the first instance from this great and fundamental revelation.

Aphistemi 'to stand away' is used sometimes of mere physical departure, as in Luke 2:37, but in the epistles it is employed in a spiritual sense. It is found three times in 1 and 2 Timothy as follows:

- A 1 Tim. 4:1 Some shall depart from the faith.
- B 1 Tim. 6:5 From such withdraw thyself.
- A 2 Tim. 2:19 Depart from iniquity.

Now the final contrast with 'the mystery of godliness' (1 Tim. 3:16), is 'the mystery of iniquity' (2 Thess. 2:7), and the balance of 1 Timothy 4:1 and 2 Timothy 2:19 in the use of the word *aphistemi* anticipates that fact. This word *aphistemi* gives us the substantive *apostasy*, a word, however, which does not occur in the A.V.. Instead we have the following:

Apostasia 'forsake Moses' (Acts 21:21); 'a falling away' (2 Thess. 2:3).

Apostasion 'divorcement' (Matt. 5:31 ; 19:7; Mk. 10:4).

The English reader cannot hope to sense the many references to this word in the two epistles to Timothy by reason of the fact that there is no apparent relation between apostasy and the many other variants of *istemi* 'to stand' which occur, but without overwhelming the reader we would indicate the way in which this root word ramifies through these two epistles, but for simplicity we will not load the text with the actual Greek words.

The bishop, in 1 Timothy 3:4,5, and 6 must 'rule' house and children, some without discipline may 'wax wanton' (1 Tim. 5:11); and may become proud 'knowing' nothing (1 Tim. 6:4). From such the believer is called upon to 'withdraw' (1 Tim. 6:5). On the surface there is nothing to show that each one of these words is a compound of the word 'to stand' and so related to the word 'apostasy' or 'departure' of 1 Timothy 4:1.

In the second epistle there is found another illuminative collection of compounds of the same root word. The unashamed workman will study 'to show' himself approved unto God (2 Tim. 2:15), he will 'resist' profane and vain babblings (2 Tim. 2:16); remembering all the time that the foundation of God 'standeth' and demands that the believer 'depart from' iniquity (2 Tim. 2:19). In chapter 3:1, the words 'shall come' are literally 'have taken their stand', and in verse 8 we have the example of Jannes and Jambres who 'withstood' Moses. In chapter 4 we have 'be instant', 'is at hand', 'withstood', and notwithstanding the Lord 'stood with me' (2 Tim. 4:2,6,15 and 17), all of which have departure from the truth, or standing for the truth as the theme. This aspect of the study, however, has a limited appeal and we leave it to those who can pursue it to advantage while we take up the more obvious development of the subject.

It is the consistent testimony of all Scripture that as the end of the ages draws near, so the darkness will deepen. There is no warrant for the idea that by the gradual process of education and betterment that mankind or Christendom will mount upwards and so usher in the Golden Age. In the Gospels we have the question: 'When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find the faith in the earth?', and the implied answer is 'No'. It will be as the days of Noah. The same is taught both by Peter and by Paul. Peter warns his readers that in the last days will come scoffers, and as we have already seen, Paul testifies the same departure from the truth within the administration entrusted to him. And this leads us to the really solemn thought, it is not possible for *an unbeliever* 'to depart' from the faith, this apostasy of 1 Timothy 4, even as of 2 Thessalonians 2 takes place within the circle of professed belief. Faith cometh by hearing - but so also does deception. Those who thus 'depart' have given heed to false teaching. *Heteros didaskalia* 'other doctrine' bounds the epistle at either end. Once again, the distribution of *prosecho* 'to give heed' in the Pastoral Epistles is helpful.

- 'Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies' (1 Tim. 1:4).
- 'Not given to much wine' (1 Tim. 3:8)
- 'Giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons' (1 Tim. 4:1).
- 'Give attendance to THE READING' (1 Tim. 4:13)
- 'Not giving heed to Jewish fables' (Tit. 1:14).

Both Paul and Peter associated 'fables' with the apostasy of the last days. The Greek word *muthos* 'myth' occurs, in addition to those already listed, in 1 Timothy 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:4; 2 Peter 1:16. It would be a sad, but an enlightening digression to go through the commentaries that have been published during the last twenty years or more, and note how many writers harp upon the word 'myth'. There is, however, more in this than meets the eye. Both the word *musterion* 'mystery' and the word *muthos* 'myth' or 'fable' are derived from the same root *Mu*, which means something kept close.

At 1 Timothy 4:1 we are at the parting of the ways. We either believe and hold fast to the *mystery* of godliness, or we start upon the downward road that leads *via* the doctrine of the myths, to the *mystery* of iniquity. Paul's one corrective is 'The Word'. For the individual believer or for the teacher alike he says: 'Give attention to the READING', 'Preach the WORD'. Peter tells us that 'myopia' *muopazo* precedes 'myth' (2 Pet. 1:9 and 16), and is associated with such practical things as virtue, temperance, and godliness (2 Pet. 1:5-7), the departure from the truth of the *mystery* of *godliness* involves aberration in daily life and practice as well as doctrinal error, and will be travestied as we shall see by 'a form of godliness' devoid of power. We are prepared, therefore, when we read on in 1 Timothy 4 to find mingled together doctrine and abstention from meats, demons and forbidding to marry, lies, conscience, hypocrisy, and bodily exercise all strangely interlinked.

The attack of Satan has been and will be levelled at the heart of the Divine Purpose 'the mystery of godliness' revealed in Genesis 3 and unfolded down the ages, but his methods continually change. He may come as an angel of light or as a roaring lion. He will tempt to a specious sanctity 'neglecting the body', 'abstain from meats', 'forbid to marry' or he may lead on to 'incontinence' and love of self and pleasure (2 Tim. 3). He will take the high road, or the low road, he will become all things to all men that by all means he might destroy. In the same way there is but one antidote; whatever form the attack may take, into whatever extremes the temptation may lead, 'The Truth' is the Divine panacea. In view of the evil day the complete armour of God provides 'the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God' (Eph. 6:17). References to 'The Truth' and to 'the Word of God' are placed on either side of the departure in 1 Timothy 3:15 and 4:5. It is the truth that sets the captive free (2 Tim. 2:25,26); and it is away from the truth that the false teachers will turn the ears of their dupes.

It is no wonder therefore with this solemn issue before us that the clearest pronouncement made by Paul on the subject of the inspiration of the Scriptures should be found in his last epistle, 2 Timothy 3:16.

6

The Pseudos, and its advocates.

From the history of Israel, and the Divine commentary of Romans 10:1-4 we can see that the trap that was laid for their feet was a false righteousness. From the teaching of Colossians, and 1 Timothy 4:1-5, we perceive that the trap laid for the feet of the church is a spurious sanctity. The departure from the faith predicted in 1 Timothy 4:1 results from giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons.

Liddon in his 'Explanatory Analysis' subdivides 1 Timothy 4:1-6. The following is an abridgment :

- (1) *Character* of the prediction. It is made *rhetos*, in express terms.
- (2) *Substance* of the prediction. Some in the latter times will apostatize.
 - (a) Unseen superhuman agencies.
 - (b) Visible and human instruments.
- (3) *Specific* errors, will be propagated.
 - (a) Prohibition of marriage.
 - (b) Enforced abstinence from certain kinds of food.
- (4) *Digression*. Confutation of the pseudo-ascetic precept.
 - Arg. (1) From the purpose of God in creation.
 - Arg. (2) From the intrinsic nature of all creatures.
 - Arg. (3) From the sanctifying power of the Word of God.
- (5) *Practical* conclusion. Timothy's ministry.

Two related agents, superhuman and human are concerned, and consist on the one hand of seduction and doctrines, and on the other hand with seared consciences and hypocrisy. The link between these agents of evil and their dupes is likewise two-fold, namely, the one 'gives heed', the other 'speaks'. Without this medium of interchange the doctrines of demons would neither have been promulgated nor received.

'Some shall depart from the faith, *giving heed*'. The word *prosecho* we have already seen occurs a number of times in the Pastoral Epistles, the affix *pros* revealing only too well that there will be an inclination on the part of the hearer, a thought that is developed in 2 Timothy 4, under the figure of the 'itching ear', and expressed in terrible reciprocal justice in 2 Thessalonians 2, where we read of those who take part in another and related apostasy that such will be deceived 'because they received not the love of the truth ... and had pleasure in unrighteousness'.

'Speaking lies'. These two words are used to translate the one Greek word *pseudologos* 'a lie-speaker'. Ordinarily we should expect some construction as we find, for example, in Acts 20:30, where 'speaking perverse things' is in the original *lalountes diestrammena* and which were used 'to draw away' disciples. Here something deeper and more deadly is intended than the mere 'speaking of lies'. Speaking lies in any sense and for any reason is to be repudiated, but is nevertheless a common failing, but to be 'a lie-speaker' is somewhat different.

The Greek *pseudos* and its derivatives occur some sixty-five times in the N.T. but are rarely used of the telling of an untruth in the common sense of 'telling lies'. It is used of false brethren, teachers, witnesses, apostles, prophets and of false Christs. Paul uses the word in one form or another twenty times, and John also uses it twenty times. In the Gospel of John we read that the Saviour said to some in His day 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it' (John 8:44). Literally, this passage reads: 'When he speaketh THE lie' and when he thus speaks 'out of his own things he speaks'. He is not only a liar himself, but 'the father of IT'.

There are three other occasions where 'The Lie' is mentioned, namely Romans 1:25, where it refers to the Babylonian corruption of primitive revelation; Ephesians 4:25, where those who are members of the New Man are urged to put away 'The Lie' and to speak truth with their neighbour, and in 2 Thessalonians 2:11 where the Mystery of Iniquity reaches the surface and is revealed in the Antichristian blasphemy of the man of sin. This is 'The Lie' of

which Satan is the father. The apostasy of 1 Timothy 4:1 is furthered by 'the oppositions of science falsely so called' *pseudonumos* (1 Tim. 6:20). There is no reference here to 'science' as the term is understood to-day, but a claim to special knowledge, a *gnosis* that was the germ from which gnosticism sprang, and which is also discoverable in Colossians 2. This 'science falsely so called' is in opposition to 'that deposit' of truth that had been entrusted to Timothy by the apostle Paul. The oppositions, or 'antitheses' of false *gnosis* are spoken of again and again by the apostle within the short compass of these three pastoral epistles. As we value 'the Truth' let us spare no pains in discovering the methods adopted by those whose purpose it is to further 'the lie' and then let us act as Scripture commands.

We have already observed when setting out the structure, that references to the teaching of *heterodox* doctrine open and close the first epistle to Timothy (1 Tim. 1:3; 6:3). Let us note in fuller detail the way in which this false teaching is described in these epistles.

'Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith' (1 Tim. 1:4). The R.V. reads 'a dispensation of God' where the A.V. reads 'godly edifying', the Greek *oikonomia* instead of *oikodomia* involving the change of but one letter. This opening warning is balanced by the one already considered, concerning the opposition of a pseudo-knowledge and which we saw was inimical to the 'deposit' which had been entrusted to Timothy, a 'deposit' in which was enshrined the truth for this 'dispensation'. In contrast with all this the apostle places 'faith unfeigned' and as this word is *anupokritos* 'not hypocritical' we are immediately reminded of those agents in the apostasy who speak 'lies in hypocrisy' (1 Tim. 4:2), and again, the contrast is emphasized by a 'good conscience' in 1 Timothy 1:5 and the 'seared conscience' of 1 Timothy 4:2. 'Vain jangling' (1 Tim. 1:6); 'empty argument' (Moffatt) is what this attitude of mind leads to.

Following the opening references to the apostasy in 1 Timothy 4:1, we come to verse 7, 'but refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness'. So in the conclusion, we read: 'he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words' (1 Tim. 6:4). Moffatt's free translation is suggestive:

'Anyone who teaches novelties and refuses to fall in with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the doctrine that tallies with piety, is a conceited ignorant creature, with a morbid passion for controversy and argument which only leads to envy, dissension, insults, insinuations, and constant friction between people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the Truth'.

Here are the 'oppositions' of a pseudo-knowledge, by which those who are 'lie-speakers' further the apostasy from the truth. To invoke 'charity' as an excuse for vigilance may be but the first of a series of steps that lead to 'truce-breaking' and 'betrayal'. We have seen that the agents of this error are said to be 'unseen and superhuman' and 'visible and human' instruments. 'Seducing spirits and doctrines of devils', and 'Lie-speakers in hypocrisy' whose consciences are cauterized.

7

The attack upon the 'One Mediator'.

(Of special importance because of the little known usage of the word 'Demon' outside Scripture).

The apostasy foretold in 1 Timothy 4, is implemented by a dual agency, spiritual and human, and as the apostasy can only be brought about by 'giving heed' to their teaching, so we may be preserved from falling and be blessed to the preservation of others by attaining a clear understanding of the menace that threatens.

'Seducing Spirits'. - *Planos*, the word translated 'seducing', is familiar to us in the form 'planet', which means a heavenly body that appears 'to wander' about the heavens in contrast with 'the fixed stars'. So we find *planetes* 'wandering stars' in Jude 13, in close proximity with the 'error' of Balaam for which the word *plane* is used (11). *Planao* means 'to lead out of the way, cause to stray or wander', but the verb does not occur in the N.T. strictly in this sense. We have the passive form used in the expression 'to err, or stray, as sheep' (Matt. 18:12,13; 1 Pet. 2:25), and 'to wander' as men (Heb. 11:38). Figuratively it is used in the active 'to mislead, seduce, or deceive; and passively to be misled, to err'. According to the usage of the word in the N.T., deception can come by 'not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God' (Matt. 22:29), and is very closely associated with 'prophecies' concerning the Second Coming of Christ. In the three passages where we read 'be not deceived' (1 Cor. 6:9; 15:33 and Gal. 6:7)

morals and practice generally are in view. The word used in 1 Timothy 4:1, 'seducing', is employed by John in his second epistle as an epithet of an antichrist. *Plane*, the 'strong delusion' of 2 Thessalonians 2:11 is retributive justice commending the ingredients of the deceiver's poisoned chalice to his own lips. In Ephesians 4:14 *plane* comes in the phrase 'lie in wait to deceive'. In 1 Timothy 6:10 Paul again speaks of those who 'err from the faith' and here he uses *apoplanao* which, be it noted, is the outcome of 'the love of money' and not of doctrinal error. Those who thus use this method are called 'spirits' which find their fuller explanation in the balancing phrase 'doctrines of devils'. These 'spirits' are 'demons' not 'devils'. *Diabolos* 'devils' only occur in the plural in 1 Timothy 3:11 'slanderers', 2 Timothy 3:3 and Titus 2:3 'false accusers'; in every other of the thirty-five occurrences, it is used in the singular and translated 'devil'.

There is one Devil, but many 'demons', while in the A.V. the word 'demon' is unknown, 'devils' being the word used. *Diabolos* and *daimonion* however must be distinguished as the Master and the servants in the spirit world of iniquity. However, this is not all by a very long way. From the holy position of the Scriptures these 'demons' are nothing but evil, but such was not the view in the outside world. In fact there is one passage in the N.T. where the translators have been obliged to make an exception, namely at Acts 17:18, where the preaching of 'Jesus and the resurrection' was interpreted by the Athenians as setting forth 'strange gods', where the word 'god' is actually the word 'demon'. It will therefore be necessary - before we can assess the instruments in the apostasy foretold by Paul - to become better acquainted with the original conception of a 'demon'. First we discover that such a man as Josephus, a Jew, a member of the priestly caste and a Pharisee, does not hesitate to use the word in the sense of Deity. In the 'Wars of the Jews' he says that the 'successes of John and of his sons' in the days of Maccabees, included three 'of the most desirable things in the world', which he enumerates, the third being 'the gift of prophecy', adding 'for the Deity conversed with him', and 'he was not ignorant of anything that was to come afterwards'. Now had the translators of the A.V. found this passage in the N.T. they could hardly have said 'for demons or devils conversed with him', yet 'demon' is the word employed by Josephus. In the next place we find Ignatius says that Christ after His resurrection said to His disciples *ouk eimi daimonion asomaton* 'I am not a disembodied demon'. This use of the word, so strange to our ears, was in current use in the days of the apostles. Plato and most of the philosophers spoke of demons as 'an inferior sort of deified powers as a middle between the sovereign gods and mortal men' (Mede), and Apuleius speaking of the demon of Socrates, says that it was 'immortal, without any end or beginning, and altogether eternal'. Plato in his 'Symposium' says 'God is not approached by men, but all commune and intercourse between God and man is performed by the mediations of demons'. Plutarch speaks of them as 'the natures which interpret and minister', 'attendants, recorders, overseers of sacred rites and mysteries'. For a further confirmation let us come to the writings of Saint Augustine (A.D. 354-430). In his book 'The City of God' the following headings speak volumes:

Chapter 18 of Book 8. 'What a religion is it that teaches men to use good demons for their messengers and interpreters'.

Chapter 21 of Book 8. 'Whether the gods do use demons for their messengers and interpreters'.

Chapter 9 of Book 9. 'Whether the friendship and favour of the celestial gods may be procured for men by the intercession of demons'.

Chapter 17 of Book 9. 'To the attaining of blessedness, man hath no need for a demon for his mediator, but of Christ alone'.

Here it will be seen that four hundred years after Christ, it could be a matter of solemn discussion by a 'father' of the Church as to the place that 'demons' could hold as 'intercessors', 'mediators' and 'advocates'. We are relieved to read at the last, that no mediator but Christ is needed; but who today would ever think of such an argument? To these so-called mediators between mortal and the celestial gods, the apostle refers when he says in 1 Corinthians 8:5 and 6: 'Though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, as there be gods many' that is *Dii c - lestes* sovereign deities 'and lords many' that is demons, presidents of earthly things, 'but to us there is but one God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and we in Him', or better, unto Him, to Whom as Supreme, we are to direct all our services 'and one Lord Jesus Christ' instead of their many mediators and demons, 'by Whom are all things' which come from the Father to us, and 'through Whom alone we find access unto Him'.

`Had the apostle said "there be gods many and demons many" to keep up the apposition, he would have been obliged to say, "to us, there is but one God, and one demon". But this he could not do as it would pollute the name of Christ, with the appellation of an idol' (Mede, `Apostasy').

The reader will have observed that in the different references to demons cited above, such words as `immortal', `mystery', `mediation', `messengers', and `intercession' are used. Heaven's messengers, we learn from the first chapter of Hebrews, are `angels'. These indeed are ministering spirits but are entirely set aside as mediators or intercessors, this place being the prerogative of `The Son' only.

In the first epistle to Timothy where the prophetic warning occurs that we are studying, God is revealed as immortal and incorruptible; Christ is revealed as `the One Mediator between God and man'; the mystery that is revealed is `the mystery of godliness' which reaches its climax in the words `received up in glory'. These words are placed at the end of the list, out of their true historical sequence, in order to emphasise the Mediatorial position of the Ascended Christ, which is the point of departure next revealed in 1 Timothy 4:1. However great is this mystery, nevertheless, the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times men would depart from the faith and the mediation of demons take the place of the work of the One Mediator Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh.

The Church at Colosse suffered much in the same way.

`Beware of anyone getting hold of you by means of a theosophy which is specious make-believe, on the lines of human tradition, corresponding to the Elemental spirits of the world and not to Christ. It is in Christ that the entire Fulness of deity has settled bodily, it is in Him that you reach your full life, and He is the Head of every angelic Ruler and Power ... So let no one take you to task on questions of eating and drinking ... with regard to fasting and the cult of angels ... Why submit to rules and regulations like "Hands off this!" "Taste not that!" "Touch not this!" - referring to things that perish by being used? These rules are determined by *human precepts and tenets*; they get the name of `wisdom' with their self-imposed devotions, with their fasting, with their rigorous discipline of the body, but they are of no value, they simply pamper the flesh!' (Col. 2:8-23, Moffatt).

We shall have to refer to this passage again when dealing with the enforcement of abstinence from both marriage and meats with which the doctrine of demons is associated. Sufficient for the moment that light is shed upon the very real danger that threatens the believer. The fact that both versions read `devils' in 1 Timothy 4:1, is of itself a snare.

What intelligent and spiritually-minded believer in the truth of the Mystery, would `give heed' to `devils'? The mind revolts against the suggestion, and the unspoken but implied reaction is that such a passage as 1 Timothy 4:1 cannot be a personal concern, but that it refers vaguely to `some' other company who would be prone to such things. This is where the bait is so skilfully disguised. The Spirit may speak `expressly' but the translation `devils' has already robbed the warning of its point. The true member of the Body of Christ, is and should be a markedly humble person. Humility is inculcated (Eph. 4:1,2) and in view of superlative grace and superheavenly glory that pertain to this high calling, nothing but `all lowliness and meekness' is fitting. Yet just here lies the snare. Colossians reveals a false humility. Where Ephesians teaches `access', yea `access with boldness', the Colossians were being driven by a false humility to speak of their unworthiness and to take to fasting, neglecting the body, adopting the cult of angels, rather than glorying in the one and only Mediation that the N.T. knows. This false doctrine pampers the religious flesh, it abstains from meats, it forbids marriage, it leads to a false sanctity.

We know alas of some, who, through the workings of this false humility, have denied the possibility that the believer is `seated together' potentially with Christ at the right hand of God, and have not hesitated to label our teaching on this passage as `blasphemy'. Little do they know that they have `given heed' to the first seductive doctrine concerning demons, and have already retreated one step from their `completeness' in Christ, and the `boldness' of their access as a consequence. The Mystery of godliness is betrayed in the house of its friends before it is attacked and its glory usurped by the man of sin and by the mystery of iniquity. We have now to consider more closely the inducements included in this doctrine of demons to a false holiness that eventually leads to apostasy. This we must do in our next article.

We have a hymn, in the book used at the Chapel of the Opened Book, written to counter some erroneous teaching in a very popular hymn. We feel constrained to quote the closing verse here:

NEARER, TO THEE.

`When our last call shall come
 Our God from Thee,
 When our last duty's done
 And we are free;
 Angels will stand aside
 No one, but Christ beside
 Can be our heavenly Guide,
 Father, to Thee'.

The possession of the `knowledge' of the truth which is according to godliness is no guarantee that a `life' of godliness will ensue. But the `acknowledgment' or `recognition' of such truth does carry with it the idea of taking one's stand, and abiding by any consequences that may follow.

`Be not ... ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner' (2 Tim. 1:8),

was a call to Timothy, who `knew' the truth, to `acknowledge' it, or, in the sense adopted in this series, to `recognize' its claims. The call comes with equal force to us to-day, when `knowledge' has increased, but when `the godly man ceaseth', and the acknowledgment of the truth, at times, costs dear.

8

`Not in any honour (save) to the satisfying of the flesh' (Col. 2:23).

We have seen that the doctrine of demons, is in reality a doctrine of a mediation other than the Mediation of Christ, and that it is in complete harmony with the purpose of the apostle that in 1 Timothy 2 he should stress the fact that `there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus', because in Chapter four, under the heading `The doctrine of demons', he was going to warn against the many `gods' and the many `mediators' who were `spirits' and not `men', whose evil teachings were to percolate into the doctrine of the church and so start the movement which was to end with the advent of the Man of Sin.

Just as the conflict of the Bible is a conflict between the Truth and the Lie, between Light and Darkness, between the Seed of the Woman and the Seed of the Serpent, so the conflict is headed up in two Mysteries, the Mystery of Godliness, where Christ is all and in all, and the Mystery of Iniquity, where Satan ascends the throne and the Son of Perdition sits in the place that none but Christ should occupy. The awful climax however is not reached by one great step, nor is it reached by immediate blasphemy or evident iniquity. Indeed it is all the other way. Those who give heed to the opening words of these seducing spirits will for the time appear to live upon a higher plane than their more grossly minded fellows. They will not marry, they will abstain from meats, no one can accuse such of self indulgence.

These prohibitions, like those of the second chapter of Colossians, lead to a mere negative sanctity `touch not, taste not, handle not'. Such self imposed self denial while having the appearance of extreme humility, can be the product of unholy conceit, a false modesty that conceals an overwhelming pride. It may not immediately appear how celibacy or a restricted diet can possibly lend themselves to an apostasy from the truth, but should such practices minister to a false superiority, there we shall have a fruitful seedplot for the sowing of heresy. A comparison of the warning of Colossians 2 with those of 1 Timothy 4, will illuminate the danger. Let us ponder these things with the aid of Scripture lest hearing the Serpent say `Ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil', we too should fall and fail of our high calling.

`Forbidding to marry'. The three Synoptic Gospels record the saying of the Lord that in the resurrection there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage, a condition which makes them `like unto the angels', Luke adding the observation that it is the children of this world that marry and are given in marriage. Marriage therefore is a relationship that pertains to this world, and which is foreign both to the resurrection life and to those spirits called angels. It would be an easy step therefore in the conduct of an argument to show that the believer in Christ who is

reckoned to have died and risen again in Him, and whose position in glory is even above that of angels and principalities, to conclude that a walk that is worthy of such a calling would lead to avoidance of so carnal a bond.

By the time John came to write his gospel, however, incipient Gnosticism had made its voice heard, and John omits the references to marrying already referred to, and instead emphasizes the fact that the Lord's opening miracle was at 'a marriage' at Cana of Galilee. If Christ could thus grace with His presence the nuptials of two villagers, it becomes evident that to 'forbid' to marry contains the seeds of anti-christian teaching. In intentional contrast with the demonic doctrine of celibacy the apostle enjoins even a second marriage upon young widows, associating the abstinence from such marrying with waxing wanton against Christ, having damnation, and having cast off their first faith (1 Tim. 5:11,12) this 'first faith' being placed in intentional opposition to the tenets of 1 Timothy 4:1-3. Moreover, in the third chapter of this same epistle and associated with the Mystery of Godliness, the apostle speaks of the offices of both bishops and deacons and stresses that both should be married *and have children*, not even permitting marriage and the avoidance of children, and associating these homely and familiar conditions with 'holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience', with evident anticipation of the reference to the forbidding of marriage and the seared consciences of first Timothy, chapter four. It evidently became necessary for the apostle to write to the Hebrews that 'marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled' (Heb. 13:4). Marriage, like meats, is a part of the conditions of life while in this 'body of our humiliation' and the intricate ceremonial of the Levitical laws of uncleanness that are associated with child birth and its necessary concomitants, could be used by these seducing spirits to create an aversion and cause a rebound to a false sanctity. While the seducing spirits lead their dupes on their vain quest for a superior sanctity that finds its roots only in the flesh, 1 Timothy 4 tells us the only real sanctity that avails before God is that which 'is sanctified by the Word of God, and prayer'.

Here we have the sanction of Scripture intelligently and thankfully endorsed by the prayer and thanksgiving of the believer. He who has reached this blessed position is indeed proof against the enticement of a specious holiness, but those who do not see that sanctification, like justification, is in the first instance a gift in grace and can have no room for the flesh in any of its ways, are the ones most likely to be used as instruments in the hands of the father of lies.

It is a mistake to look upon the word 'meats' in 1 Timothy 4 as being a reference to 'flesh' and as distinct from a 'non-flesh' diet. This has turned the eyes of many to Roman Catholic and Ritualistic practices and so prevented them from beholding the possibility of a beam being in their own eye. The word *broma* means in the first place any solid food as distinct from drink :

'I have fed you with "milk", and not with "meat"' (1 Cor. 3:2).

The 'Meat' offering of the second chapter of Leviticus is entirely devoid of 'flesh', and the expression 'Grace before meat' means the giving of thanks before partaking of any meal. The terms 'sweetmeats' 'greenmeat', &c., further indicate the range of the word. While therefore a super sanctity would naturally abstain from flesh as an article of diet, that is not the exclusive teaching of these seducing spirits. The hidden danger in the command to abstain at all contradicts the purpose of God, for these 'meats' God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth ... it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. 'It is sanctified'. Here is true sanctity as contrasted with the false sanctity of abstention. In the Word of God we learn that at the first, the food of mankind was 'every herb bearing seed ... and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat' (Gen. 1:29). As these words apply to the Garden planted by God before the curse came down on the earth, there was no need to provide against poisonous and noxious plants, they did not exist. At the expulsion of man, he was under a necessity to eat bread in the sweat of his face. The earth would no longer yield 'of itself' but required the labours of husbandry, and 'bread' made from wheat, barley or rye became practically 'the staff of life'. After the flood, for reasons not stated, but which are implied, flesh meat was added to human diet by Divine command :

'... even as the green herb have I given you all things' (Gen. 9:3).

To abstain from flesh meat for humanitarian reasons, or for any feeling of superior sanctity is therefore to take a step in the direction of apostasy. Later, the apostle said:

`All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient ... Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake ... whatsoever is set before you, eat' (1 Cor. 10:23-27).

The only abstinence commended is that which stoops to yield to the qualms of another man's conscience (1 Cor. 10:29). There may be genuine reasons why an individual should abstain from one form of food or another, because of weakness, sickness or other infirmity, but even this, justifiable as it may be, can easily become a `cult' and should be followed with care. How many books and tracts have unwittingly emphasized the abstinence inculcated in the fourth chapter of first Timothy in an endeavour to deepen the spiritual life! How few have emphasized the liberality and largeness of 1 Timothy 6:17, `Trust ... in the living God, Who giveth us RICHLY all things to ENJOY'. It is a false sanctity that would rid the believer's vocabulary of these words and but feeds the vanity of self imposed humility.

Feeding of all kinds, like marriage, is an indication that we are still in the body of this humiliation. There is no warrant for believing that the spiritual body which will fit the believer for `heavenly places' in resurrection will be sustained in life by any sort of digestive process at all, but even so, though it be a reminder of our present humiliation, we must resist the temptation to a specious refinement that while apparently neglecting the body, yet ministers to the satisfying of the flesh, for this is a covert attack upon our completeness and our acceptance in Christ, even as the doctrines of demons was an attack upon His sole Mediation between God and men.

It must not be forgotten moreover that the word `hypocrite' meant `one who plays a part on a stage, a player, an actor'.

`So *hupekritis*an *tragodoi* means `tragedies were performed'. Of course, in time the idea of playing a part, feigning, dissembling, took on a sinister meaning, and the word hypocrite emerged. It should further be remembered that in the Greek plays the actor spoke through a mask, impersonating the character he was supposed to represent. It must further be understood, that in course of time, `good men' who died were promoted to the rank of demons or mediators, and `demons and heroes differed but in more or less antiquity: the more ancient heroes being called demons, and the younger demons, heroes' (Mede).

The prevalence of `saint-worship' in the Romish Church is one of the more modern ways in which demon mediation has usurped the place of Christ; but Spiritism is another, for the words `speaking lies in hypocrisy' could mean `speaking lies in a mask, as an impersonator or play actor'.

The enlightened believer is neither likely to be deceived by the claims of some that dead `saints' act as mediators, nor to be ensnared by the Spiritists at their seances; but the Devil can pose as an angel of light and his ministers as ministers of righteousness. He can lead on to a false humility by giving undue prominence to an honoured minister of the Word, to a Church position, to anything and everything good in itself, so long as it comes between the believer and his Lord. In each and every case the remedy is `to hold the Head', to remember in the calling we have received that `Christ is all, and in all'. We must not dwell unduly upon this opening phase of the apostasy that is to come, for the words `latter times' can well refer to those times that followed close upon the end of the apostolic age. The seeds were then sown that will bear their evil fruit in the perilous times with which the present dispensation ends and in the Mystery of Iniquity which will be manifested after the hope of the Church of the One Body has been realized.

There are warnings that belong to the close of the present dispensation that are found in the second epistle to Timothy. These have a bearing upon the time now present, and to these we must give heed.

9

The Character of the `last days'

The apostasy of 1 Timothy 4 started early in the history of Christendom, but the prophetic warning of 2 Timothy 3 refers to `the last days', the extreme verge, the days immediately before the end of the present dispensation and possibly to the days in which we live, or which are imminent. The one characteristic of these days here revealed, is that they are `perilous', a word we have examined in the fourth article of this series and one which is used of men possessed of `devils' or demons, and who were in consequence `exceeding fierce'. The `last days' therefore will be `perilous' indeed. In the preparatory and incipient stages of this great and terrible apostasy, the bait was cleverly

hidden beneath seductions to abstinence and self-denial; now, as the end approaches, this disguise is thrown away and the hideous character of the hidden plague is made manifest. Now `self' is prominent, and instead of a false humility, we have such words as `boasters, proud ... heady, highminded'. Where first Timothy tells us that the doctrine of demons leads to `forbidding to marry', the present passage reveals that men will be `incontinent' and `without natural affection'. Where the early departure was marked by a specious sanctity, in the last days no such pretence will be made, they will be `unholy'.

The most marked characteristic of this departure however, is its relation to `love'. The word *philos* (love) appears at the beginning and the close of this long and terrible list.

Men shall be *Philautos* (lovers of their own selves);
Philarguria (lovers of money);
Philedonos (lovers of pleasures); rather than
Philotheos (lovers of God).

The warning against `the love of money' as a root of all evil, is sounded in 1 Timothy 6:10 which, by coveting, some `have erred from the faith'. In the parallel passage in Colossians, the apostle warns against `a vain deceitful philosophy' (Col. 2:8), which introduces many features that are similar to those given in 1 Timothy 3. The epistles to Timothy and Titus are not without the corrective to this false and selfish love, as the following series of seven references will show. We have no knowledge of the exact chronological relationship of these two epistles but we place all the references in Titus first because of the greater number.

- A Titus 1:8. Lover of hospitality, *philoxenos*.
- B Titus 1:8. Lover of the good, *philagathos*.
- C Titus 2:4. Lover of husband, *philandros*.
- D Titus 2:4. Lover of children, *philoteknos*.
- C Titus 3:4. Lover of mankind, *philanthropia*.
- B Titus 3:15. Lover of those in the faith, *phileo ... en pistei*.
- A 1 Tim. 3:2. Lover of hospitality, *philoxenos*.

Is it accidental that the apostasy of 1 Timothy 4 is associated with forbidding marriage, and commanding to abstain from meats, and the antidote to the false love of the last days, should stress hospitality, husband and child, and link such homely love with the love that embraces `the good' and `the faith', and which reaches up to the majestic philanthropy of God Himself? The root of true doctrine thrives in the home life of the believer, and where the home is a place of light and love, the church will thrive, but whenever church going, church meetings, or that which can be comprised under the term `churchianity', takes the place of home there the rot sets in, and the root withers. Such will have exchanged `the mystery of godliness' (1 Tim. 3:16) for `the form of godliness' (2 Tim. 3:5). But the fact that a form is retained is an indication that professing believers are still before us.

In the first epistle to Timothy, the safeguard on either side of the mystery of godliness is expressed thus:

`If I tarry long ... behave thyself in the house of God' (1 Tim. 3:15).
`The mystery of godliness' (1 Tim. 3:16).
The apostasy (1 Tim. 4:1).
`Till I come, give attendance to reading' (1 Tim. 4:13).

In 2 Timothy the corrective is the Inspired Word and its preaching. While Timothy is warned that `evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived', his own safeguard was to `continue' in the things he had learned and had been assured of, knowing of whom he had learned them remembering that all scripture was given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction, and that he could only hope to stand against the swelling tide of apostasy by preaching `The Word'.

`The time will come' (2 Tim. 4:3). Here is a resumption of the apostle's revelation concerning the last days. Men will not endure sound doctrine. The word translated `endure' *anechomai*, is a compound of the verb *echo* `to

have', and the meaning of the apostle is well expressed in the colloquial expression in use today: they will not 'have' it. The word means 'to suffer' anything, or 'to bear with' anything, and so indicates an intolerance of the truth. There are several compounds of *echo* 'to have' in these three Pastoral epistles which should be considered together as they all have a bearing upon the attitude which different men will adopt at the time of the end. We have already learned that the initial departure from the truth started with 'giving heed' (1 Tim. 4:1) and this word is *prosecho*. Over against this the apostle says 'give attendance' to the reading of the Word, and uses *prosecho* again.

The apostle had already warned Timothy against 'giving heed' to fables, which were antagonistic to the dispensation which he had received from God (1 Tim. 1:4) where once again *prosecho* is employed. A similar passage is that of Titus 1:14. These fables, added the apostle, but 'minister' or 'occasion' questionings, and here the word used is *parecho*. The word 'to abstain' in 1 Timothy 4:3 is *apecho*. Over against this we have the 'holding fast' the faithful Word (Tit. 1:9) *antechomai*; and the advice to Timothy 'take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine' (1 Tim. 4:16) where *epecho* is found. The complete safeguarding of the truth and the only true means of stemming the apostasy and preserving the trust and truth of the mystery, is summed up in a passage where the apostle uses the simplest form of the word *echo*, 'hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me' (2 Tim. 1:13). Here we have seven words, *echo* 'to have or to hold' and six combinations of that word with prepositional affixes. The collection of this series must not be considered as an interesting trifle, it is supplying the English reader with something of the emphasis that the reader of the original gathered as he pondered the warning concerning 'giving heed' with which the apostasy starts, and the 'intolerance' with which it ends.

The passage 'They heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears', could mean, to the English reader, that the teachers were the ones that had the itching ear, and this ambiguity is rectified in the R.V.. Moffatt gives a vigorous and suggestive rendering of the passage:

'Keep at it in season and out of season, refuting, checking, and exhorting men; never lose patience with them, and never give up your teaching, for the time will come when people will decline to be taught sound doctrine and will accumulate teachers to suit themselves and tickle their own fancies; they will give up listening to the Truth and turn to myths' (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

The figure of the itching ear was known to Timothy, as it is found in Greek writers before the days of the apostle. It denotes among other things a desire for something pleasant at all costs, a shirking of responsibility and a shelving of troublesome truth. There will be no dearth apparently of teachers in the last days, who will satisfy this craving, and the main basis will be the opposite of the *musterion* (mystery), it will be the *muthos* (the myth or fable)

Modern civilization has made it necessary that all along the roads both in town and country there should be erected signs, warning and directing the traveller. Some of these signs are long distance warnings, e.g. telling a lorry driver that some miles ahead is a bridge only fifteen feet high, others are immediate and are at our very door. These warnings and signs may be used as symbols of the Signs of the Times. Long distance signs are those of Matthew 24, the movements now taking place in Palestine and among the Nations. The more immediate signs include the notice 'Beware' found in Colossians 2, and the warning concerning apostasy in 1 and 2 Timothy which we have had before our notice in these articles.

The testimony of *The Berean Expositor* is such that it cannot afford either the space or the time to elaborate those long distance signs that belong to the dispensation that will immediately follow the close of that of the mystery, but it does fall within our responsibility to draw the reader's most serious attention to the warnings that are found in Paul's later epistles, for such belong to our calling, to our peace and to our hope of reward.