

places equally remote and inaccessible have not heard the message. It is, indeed, a question to what extent the Gospel must be preached in the whole world in order to meet the condition of the prophesy and prepare the way for Christ's coming. Is it enough that in each nation be raised a voice of warning as a testimony to take away all excuse, or must the Gospel be preached in every village and win the attention of every individual? Apparently the former is all that is required by Christ's language. If so, this condition is probably near fulfilment. The late Secretary Clark of the American Board once said if the same rate of progress be made in missions that has been recently, in fifty years the whole world will be Christianized.

Christ then describes

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

This should be when Jerusalem was compassed with armies and that shameful profanation of the temple take place prophesied by Daniel as "the abomination of desolation." Christ gives a number of graphic details concerning the destruction of the city which afterwards were literally fulfilled, and he warned His disciples so emphatically to flee that in the subsequent horrors of the siege not a single Christian failed to escape.

The notable feature in this portion of Christ's prophesy is the intimation of a long period between the destruction of Jerusalem, or the end of the Jewish dispensation and the final coming of Christ, or the end of this earthly and Christian dispensation. "Jerusalem", he says, "shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled." Christ's disciples evidently thought of the end of Jerusalem and the end of the world as, if not the same thing, in close succession. Christ indicated, instead, a considerable period of time intervening, described as "the times of the Gentiles." It should be known by the fact that Jerusalem was in subjection to a Gentile power. This is the condition of things to-day. But it is equally clear that this is not to be the permanent condition. Christ unmistakably intimates that the times of Gentile domination shall end and Jerusalem once more be in the hands of the Jews.

At this point Christ speaks of

THE SIGNS OF THE END OF THE WORLD.

He gives first a partial recapitulation of signs already referred to in his preliminary warnings. Christ's coming shall be preceded by false Christs and lying wonders. That has been true in every age of the history of the Christian Church. Every effort has been made by false teachers to startle mankind with the appearance of miracles. Theosophism, spiritualism, Christian Science, yes, and we may add, the faith cure, are all modern instances of ways in which men are thus led astray. True miracles may be known by the importance of the doctrines they substantiate. All others do but lead astray. With this false teaching shall be gloom and trouble. Fear shall take possession of men and whole nations shall be in distress. This is a part of the universal law that where the carcass is there the vultures gather. Wherever there is moral corruption, as was the case with the Jewish nation, there enemies are ready to tear to pieces the dying victim.

Three things are here declared regarding Christ's coming. It will be like lightening, sudden and universally seen. It will be a glorious display accompanied by a summons which will be unmistakable. It will be marked by an immense assemblage of God's people gathered from every part of the earth.

This part of the prophesy ends by the assurance that the development of history leading up to this startling coming of Christ, shall be gradual like the opening of the buds in the spring. It shall also be marked by the continuance of the Jewish race as such on earth. The word commonly translated "generation" sometimes means in classic usage "race", and there is force in the argument Dean Alford urges for so translating the word here. Frederick the Great once asked his chaplain to give in one word a proof of Christianity. "The Jews, your Majesty", was the reply. The continuance of the Jewish people on earth, as distinct and unmistakable though scattered among all nations, is a continual proof that the rest of Christ's prophesy is coming true.

The disciples had asked for a date and a sign. Signs not a few Christ had freely given; but the date was something not to be revealed. This is a profound secret and those who fix on a date for Christ's coming claim to know what Christ said he could not tell.

Christian Giving in the Sanctuary Service.*

Once every year, on the day of atonement, from the Samaritan altar on the summit of Mount Gerizim, the smoke of the burnt offering ascends and mingles with the clouds. In no other place for the past eighteen hundred years has such a sight been witnessed. Elsewhere that altar fire has gone out forever. We, however, are so familiar with that scene in the history of the Church of God before the Christian era, that although all the symbolic teaching and pointing of the altar service has ended in its actual fulfilment, it still influences our judgment. We are affected to-day in our sense of the proprieties of God's house by the sacrificial blood, and fire, and smoke, and their relation to the ancient worship. The use of the word "sacrifice" in our English Bible, when describing the offerings on the altar, sensibly controls thought and shapes our estimate of the proper thing. It has taken away the simple idea of an offering, and led the mind to conceive only of something put upon the altar, and thereby made sacred.

The word "sacrifice," derived from the Latin and meaning something made sacred, and implying dedication upon an altar, fails to be an equivalent of the Hebrew in the Old, or the Greek in the New Testament, when speaking of an offering. The thing offered ceremonially, with the English word "sacrifice" describing it, has led the religious mind to think of the life poured out and the body consumed on an altar as the only offering belonging to the services of God's worship, and that form of offering having passed away, nothing appeals to us in its place as belonging to or being an act of worship.

To give money is one thing, but to give money in God's house and as a part of divine worship is another thing. The ceremonial offering of common money, which buys alike the good and bad, seems unseemly to the person who feels affectionately and tenderly, but thinks not deeply.

Although from the earliest times, as was true of the time of St. Paul, collections were made among Christians for the saints, presumptively the poor, they seem at some period in very early times to have come to be regarded as gifts only to the saints, and not as gifts to God. There may have been others, but the only contributions in apostolic times of which we read in Scripture were the contributions for the saints. How these offerings were made, or whether given as alms, or in some cases as distribution of goods held in common, as some have written, is not stated. Down through the post-apostolic times the contributions among the Christians continued, but almost always, if not in every instance, the gift was strictly for the poor. At some time, if not from the very beginning, these offerings were taken in the church service. But whether recognized at all after apostolic times as a gift to God, it will be hard to prove until we come to the time of Edward VI. of England. Yet it is claimed that at one time in France, as early as A.D. 700, a gift for the ransom of the soul in lands or goods or money was to be granted by deed or epistle, executed in the presence of witnesses, and the writing laid upon the altar. Note, the thing or the money was not present, nor does the idea of worship in this act appear. The rubrics of the first prayer book of Edward VI. provide for collections for the poor to be taken, giving special direction for a collection in the time of service into the *poor man's boxes*, but no word in prayer or address recognized the fact that the gift was an act of worship. In the second prayer book of Edward VI., put forth in 1552, the fifth year of his reign, the offering being still given for the poor only, in the prayer commonly called the prayer for the Church militant, for the first time in the English liturgy the offering is regarded as alms to God.

We do not hesitate to claim that the Christian act of contributing to the relief of the poor saints no doubt was also the custom of all Christians, and that the custom was continued with the Reformers and in the Reformed churches; but the collection among Christians seems with them, also, to have been limited to the gifts to the poor, and to be no part of divine service.

*A paper read by Ruling Elder Ralph E. Prime at the Glasgow General Council of the Pan-Presbyterian Alliance, June, 1896.