

“Touching the Coming of the Lord.”

By

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(*Luanza*).

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

15/- per 100.

HUNT, BARNARD & CO., LTD., AYLESBURY, BUCKS.
E. J. BURNETT, 15, KING EDWARD AVENUE, WORTHING.
G. H. FROMOW, 10, WHITEHALL GARDENS, CHISWICK, W.4

“Touching the Coming of the Lord.”

By the late DAN CRAWFORD (Luanza).

This theme of the coming of the Lord is glorious, for come He will, our Lord of Love. When will the petulant phrase, “The Hope of the Church,” be transformed to this higher watchword, “The Expectancy of Christ”? It is a sign of poor attainment in grace when Christians begin with themselves, not Him; our righteousness, not His; our little field of labour, not His great world-field; our Hope, not His hope of an all-the-world-reaping. For it is certain if we are seated in Him in the Heavenlies, then we can only have His outlook, His expectation.

Possibly the day is coming when, beginning with the expectancy of Christ (and nothing less or lower), teachers will lead off with a picture of such a large expectancy of Christ that the wonder will arise how we ever could have dared to expect Christ’s return long ago, when He all the while had been expecting His church to belt the globe with His Gospel.

“There are,” said the sainted Robert Chapman, “two ways of looking at the coming of the Lord. If I be in the constant spirit of worship within the veil, according to Hebrews, I shall see the future as does Christ. Over 1800 years ago He said, ‘I come quickly.’ And, whereas, in point of desire, I put nothing whatever between that object and my soul, because Christ puts nothing; yet, on the other hand, if you ask whether the fervency of my love to the Lord and the brightness of that hope are diminished, because I see that He must take time to make that coming worthy of Himself, I say, No: He waits patiently, and so do I.”

Or put it this way. Did not our living, loving Lord anticipate this tendency of the human heart in His last great prayer? For almost in the same breath

when He said, " Father, I will that they also . . . be with Me where I am," did He not wisely say, " I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world "?

Or again: they wanted to be with Him where He was in glory, forgetful of the fact that Christ had pledged His presence *with them* even unto the end of the age. How then could they be with Christ in Heaven before the end of the age, if Christ had surely said He would be with them even unto the end of the age? Thus they were looking up to him on the throne, whereas the standpoint of Paul's prison epistles was that of the Christian, in Christ on the throne, *looking down on it all*.

The One Body of Christ.

In reference to the common error regarding that much perverted phrase, " We that are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord." These words do not commit the Apostle to the belief that the Lord Jesus would return during his lifetime. Shortly afterwards we find him using the same language concerning resurrection (2 Cor. iv. 14), " shall raise up us also." His sympathy with those who were anxious about their dead leads him to associate himself with the mourners at Thessalonica; his sense of failing physical powers leads him to associate himself with those who had died at Corinth.

Paul keeps at this unifying " we," " we," because the life-long burden of his ministry was " the body of Christ," a divine unit, living or dead. Moreover, this was no mere whim of choice, for this glorious truth *really BEGAN Paul, before ever Paul began it.* What do I mean? This: was he not converted by this very truth of the " body" in the challenge from the glory, " Why persecutest thou *Me* ? " If, then, this dear truth saved his soul, why be surprised that the God who claims that all sorts of ministry in His church are *only* vital as they correspond to the personal experience of him who ministers it? I repeat, if this be so, then why expect otherwise than that the Paul who was saved by the truth of the body (" why . . . thou . . . Me ? ") should fail to be the special custodian of that same " body" message?

Moving out, then, from this central position of

all God's ways in these days converging in on the culmination of a complete "body," the key is found in the fact that the word "body" in its Pauline sense is so nearly equivalent to its own adjective "complete" that the whole emphasis lies in the thought of a non-mutilated because non-partial body without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. This was the great formative factor in the soul of Paul:

1. He was saved by the very thought of this "one" body.
2. Hence God right off at his conversion telling him he must bear witness far hence amongst the Gentiles: the "one" body and its ingathering postulated this prior evangelising to earth's ends.
3. Hence this same Paul says, "I *must* see Rome"; for this "must" was grounded on God's initial promise at conversion, "far hence amongst the Gentiles." Besides—
4. To prove that that was no mere petulant desire of his, "I *must* see Rome," God appeared by night and endorsed his desire, "so *must* thou bear witness also at Rome," the Pauline "must" being echoed by the divine "must" because Christ had begun it all with "the Gospel *must* first be preached in all the world for a witness." Moreover—
5. This was such an inexorable objective that the declaration was doubled when the angel appeared, "Thou 'MUST' be brought before Caesar."

No "Any Moment" Coming in Paul's Writings.

Here, then, you have a delightful Paul scarcely hinted about on the modern platform, a Paul who, all his life, *was* looking for the coming of the Lord, yet who never dared to think that the said coming would be at any moment. For had he not these God-guaranteed events intervening and blocking the path of Christ's return for his "whole" body? (watch the redundant adjective). Paul naturally ends as he began by looking for his intervening death prior to The Return. For this is what his "I am ready to depart," this is what his "to depart and be with Christ which is far better" amounts to. I mean

that all through his Christian career the Paul who began for God on the personal guarantee that he *must* bear witness far hence among the Gentiles, this Paul saw all these intervening itineraries as necessary to the ingathering of The Body for which and for which alone He, his Lord, would return. He is not coming for greedy "me," "me," but for "us," yes, all of us.

There was no mental jerk or jolt in all this: he had no hope other than that of his Lord, and Christ's hope was Paul's, yea, Christ was in him *hoping His own hope*; the hope of a complete bride. For that Christ indwelling Paul, had *He* not said He would

(1) "Delay." (2) "Tarry." (3) Be gone "a long time." (4) Go to "a far country." (5) Then "after a long time cometh the Lord of these servants." Finally, (6) saying that certain specified events "*must needs* come to pass," clinching it all (7) with the warning, "Take heed, that no man deceive you, saying, The Time 'draweth near' ?

Till I Come—After a Long Time.

If I have thus pressed the parable of the pounds declaration it is because Christ authorises me to do so. If I seem cold of heart in thus saying "after a long time cometh the Lord of these servants," it is because, technically and specifically, we are told that our living, loving Lord spotted this tendency of the human heart, and in Luke xix spake unto them this very parable "BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT THAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD SHOULD IMMEDIATELY APPEAR." And this same Christ, in Paul's heart, whispered the same sweet consolation concerning the greatness of His love unto the last and least member of The Body's ingathering.

Then, it was, when He gave His warning in Luke xix, He foreshadowed the "Till He come" treasure with its twin "Occupy TILL I COME," the very context killing the idea often expressed that in this "till He come" there is a hint that He may come before the supper is ended. The "hint" is the exact opposite, for its twin "till I come" is in a context of "after a long time" He returns from "a far country."

Beloved, the enemy is at the gate: thousands of years have passed since He went away, and I, out here in the long grass, I know why He is not back yet. Why? Because His body is not complete and here we have vast mileage untouched. It is astounding that this truth of the complete body has been viewed from the wrong standpoint, for if we are seated in Christ in the heavenlies, then we are looking down on the whole earth as a lost *unit*, every bit of it being in full and frank view. Not one pet bit of it more entitled to a hearing than another! It is *His* Hope, not ours, and thus it is He is in us the hope of glory, hoping *His own hope of a whole bride from the earth's end*.

No "Any Moment" Coming in Peter's Writings.

Yet I shiver lest I hurt the sacred susceptibilities of dear hearts and true. But the analogy of Peter must be cited, as he and Paul embody the *whole* New Testament teaching in the *official* sense that the former was the Apostle of the Circumcision as the latter was that of the Uncircumcision. Therefore, the old Peter-and-Paul connotation is more than a mere jingle; they, these two, are the representative heads of the two, *and only two*, possible divisions of apostolic ministry, the Circumcision and Uncircumcision. Peter then, like Paul, ended as he began, by *looking for death, not rapture*. Long ago, when he was quite young, Christ told him—

1. That he would live to be old, and
2. That he would die for his Lord and like Him.

Did he, therefore, fail to look for his Lord because he knew he must grow old and die?

Nay, for Peter it is who teaches *the doctrine of the double-look*. I mean when he says, "Looking for . . . the coming . . . nevertheless" (beyond that first look!) "we look for . . . " *something else*. I cite this as a proof of a deep daily principle in life: I mean the ordered sequence of arranged events when *after* some one thing you expect another. This is the Peter, remember, whose last greeting in his first Epistle is the Pauline "*in Christ Jesus*." "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness looking for and hastening

the coming of the day of God?" Yes, *looking for it*, yet all the time while I, like Peter, am looking for death, the death pre-ordained for me and pre-explained by my Lord and Master. Surely there you have the man who wrote about the possibility of such a thing as the double-look practising it.

I press this double phase, for Peter doubles it a second time when he says (1) not merely to look for it, but (2) *to hasten* the coming of that very thing we look for: "looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God." *All* of which he associates with his "beloved brother Paul" in "*all* of his epistles," "speaking in them of *these* (very) *things*."

Intervening Events and the Sanctifying Hope.

Here, then, my point is that Peter and Paul never lost one tiny bit of the sanctifying power of the hope of Christ's coming again by knowing and looking for any intervening events: nor did George Müller, Henry Dyer, Robert Chapman or James Wright either. Was this God's answer in power to Mr. Darby's challenge that "you cannot live a holy life if you allow intervening events to come between the any moment possibility of Christ's return"? Did God accept, I ask, this threat of his, and in a *special* manner seal unto the souls of these men who rejected any-momentism his sanctifying grace?

How could Paul look for the Lord at any moment when he knew right from the start of his saved life that he must go "far hence" for God and His Gospel?

How could that church look for the Lord at any moment when it knew ahead for *at least ten days*, "thou shalt have tribulation ten days"?

And most convincing of all: take the case of the "mother" Assembly at Jerusalem. There was an assembly that had, so to speak, a list of local events *that must happen* to those saints **BEFORE** Christ could return. Had He not told them (1) that the Romans would come, and (2) when they came, did He not tell them what to do? And (3) does not even an outsider like Josephus record how, obeying the command of their Master, those early Christians *did flee* to Pella and, so fleeing, escaped?

Now, then, here is a poser: the mother Assembly baptized into one body, continuing steadfastly in the breaking of bread and prayers; yes, this very assembly, our model, *did* know of intervening events that must occur in its own history *before* Christ came again. Yet they all were *looking for* the Lord from Heaven: all loved His appearing, but knew that, before He did so appear, those very events He Himself had pre-stipulated must intervene. I press this point about their "loving" His appearing, for how many remember that it was *looking-for-death* Paul who used this dear phrase, "all who *love* His appearing"? Yes, I, Paul have just said I am expecting death, but *at any rate, oh, at any rate* I love the appearing that will not be in my day!

Note that Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians is corrective of *their misunderstanding* of the first, *fixing* as it does the time of the Church's solace *when* the Lord shall be revealed in flaming fire taking vengeance. In the first he had said they did not need any further writing on a subject they knew "perfectly," and now in the second he explains why they knew it perfectly: "Remember ye not while I was with you *I was (always) telling you* (imperfect) these things." This shows that Paul's great theme was, not any-momentism, but talking much, talking mightily, of the times and the seasons, and the seasons as contained in Christ's great programme in Matt. xxiv.

The Day of the Lord, and of Christ.

And, besides, when you see the sacred New Testament glorying in changing again and again "the day of our Lord" for the "day of the Lord Jesus," for "the day of Jesus Christ," for "the day of God," etc., etc., I say, when you see all these varied names blending into one, might we not pause to think whether we are on safe ground when we seek to put asunder what God has joined?

No wonder Peter saw all this ahead and at once claims that beloved brother Paul was referring in "all his epistles" to the very same "day of God" as he, Peter, did. Certainly, all this too refined

manner of differentiating where the dear old Bible does not is surely a warning to us. . . .

In thus trying to differentiate between "the day of the Lord" and the "day of Christ" it is quite conceivable that the breadth of our assumption is out of all proportion to the narrow dimensions of the point proved. For what do we make out of limiting this ushering in of the "day of the Lord" to the Jews and the world, not to the Church? Nothing at all: "the Messias which is called the Christ" proves that in its initial sense "Christ" is as saturated with Hebrew idea as "the Lord." Therefore, why should they not be easily interchangeable: is it not written that God has joined the two titles together in the thrilling words of exaltation that He hath made this same Jesus "both Lord and Christ"? Then why seek to put asunder what God hath joined? At any rate do not let us invoke the aid of the New Testament, for, again and again, Paul in particular seems to glory in changing the name for this wonderful "Day" ahead.

Leading off with its maximum "the day of the Lord Jesus Christ" the verbal shrinkage begins in "the day of the Lord Jesus," after which it is transposed into (2) "the day of Jesus Christ," which again shrinks to plain (3) "the day of Christ," until finally it stands stripped of all qualifications in blunt "The Day." I say, when you see Paul (it *is* Paul, mark you) so glorying in these alternative names for the same day, surely it ill becomes us *to refuse him this right* in 1 Thess. v. 2, to add one more to the many, "the day of the Lord." No wonder Peter saw all this tedious trifling ahead and at once claims "beloved brother Paul" was referring in "all his epistles" to the very same "day of God" as he, Peter, did. And, besides, this mention of Peter is another proof in point—proof, I mean, of God's delight in giving varying names for the same event: up in verse 10 of his last epistle had he not called it the "day of the *Lord*"? And here only two verses further down at verse 12 he calls that same event "the day of God."

We hear a lot about rightly dividing the word of God, but how little is hinted that this very phrase

postulates a wrongly dividing of the same. Why should not "the day of *God*" equate "the day of Christ," when the same interchange occurs in the phrasing "Judgment seat of God" and "Judgment seat of Christ"?

"Jacob's Trouble"—"Much Tribulation"—"The Great Tribulation."

In noting what some say about the Great Tribulation, I regret they fail to see it is as extensive as it is intensive: they say it is the "time of Jacob's trouble," whereas the New Testament labours the point to the contrary. I mean, the mere phase of "Jacob" being in the trouble cannot nullify the great sweeping phrases that make it an all-the-world affair. For "Jacob" is a mere pinpoint in the immensity when we see that

1. "It shall come on *all* the world."
2. It shall "try them that dwell on the earth."
3. For power was given over the beast "over *all* kindreds, and tongues, and nations."
4. Yea, he "causeth small and great, rich and poor, free and bond to receive a mark," hence finally—
5. God wins out of it a great multitude which no man can number out of "*all* nations, kindreds, people and tongues." Here, then, God uses *all conceivable human language* to destroy the idea that mere "Jacob" can engulf such a vast polyglot host of humans.

In fact, these very multitude of souls are intentionally set down side by side, in contrast to the very "Jacob" in question. Rev. vii, as it were, puts them down in parallel columns, the tribes of "Jacob" on one side with specific tribal name against the all-tribes. I mean one nation, in contrast with "all nations"; one tongue—the Hebrew versus "every tongue"; one nation, the Jew, in contrast with "all kindreds and peoples." Thus God exhausts human nomenclature to differentiate between mere "Jacob" and these many millions. And yet, alas, we run off on a poor little phrase, "the time of Jacob's trouble." Does not the greater contain the lesser?

Thus, I urge, the great Tribulation is as extensive as it is intensive, is as wide as the world because Antichrist follows up *Christ* in His all-the-world propaganda. The enemy sows tares in *the field*, and the field is *the world*. Besides, all this enters on the edge of the bizarre, this "Jacob's trouble" expedient of exegesis, I mean; when any teachers are forced to admit that during this terrible time, *and before it*, the Jews have been already restored nationally to their own Palestine! This, I say, grates on one's soul, and lacks everything but a laboured look of expediency in its self-condemned construction. Besides, why is he named ANTI-Christ if not that, as the Church which is His body is "Christ" mystical, then ANTI-Christ must surely be ANTI the Body of Christ. Will he not strike at the darling of God? His name is not ANTI-the-Jews, it is *Antichrist*, and Paul calls us "Christ."

The blessed Paul went all over the churches confirming the souls of the believers that through *much* tribulation they must enter the Kingdom; therefore, as they had already entered the Kingdom in the spiritual sense, then this second entering the Kingdom through much tribulation must mean that time when "*immediately after* the tribulation of those days ... then shall appear ... great glory." The Bishops believe in a confirmation of another kind, but where do we perform the true Pauline kind, confirming the minds of believers that tribulation, much tribulation, is ahead for all who follow our Lord? For considering the manner of the New Testament in *scarcely once* repeating the same phrase for the same thing, this "*much* tribulation" is a fair equivalent for "*the great tribulation*."

The First Resurrection.

In the only verse in scripture where the 1,000 years is specifically mentioned; I say, there it is in such a *locus classicus* God fixes the first resurrection, fixing also at the same time the fact that while others *may be* there, not mentioned, *the ones* we can dogmatize upon as being in it, are those very great tribulation saints "which had not worshipped the beast neither his image." Thus it is God ariseth in wrath against the very idea that the church will not

go through the great tribulation by insisting in the very *locus classicus* of Pre-Millenniarism that they alone are mentioned as being in it!

The proof that they are *our* brethren of the one body is very certain because technical and not conjectural. I mean, that all down the Apocalypse, and beginning with our own body-brother John who initiates the designation, there is seen a remnant wearing, so to speak, the same badge, the same technical title. Going backwards from this great "first resurrection" this holy band is called (1) those who were beheaded for "the witness of Jesus and the word of God," (2) "they that do the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus," (3) the "fifth seal souls" who were slain for "the word of God and the testimony which they held," (4) to all of whom John, our John of the body of Christ, allies himself in the claim that he, too, is one of that very remnant and is in Patmos for "the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." (5) Add to all this the crowning fact that even the glorified one, John had almost worshipped; yes, that one claims the unity of the body in the astounding statement that he, too, is "thy fellow-servant and of thy brethren, that have the testimony of Jesus." Here then, oh, man of God, if that glorious being can claim unashamed technical unity with the tribulation remnant, surely we poor mundane beings can do so. At any rate, the crushing point is that John leads it all off by claiming that he, too, is one of the remnant—I mean the-Word-of-God-and-the-testimony-of-Jesus-Christ-remnant. Therefore, they deny the unity of the body of Christ, who break away from the John in this co-claim.

It was this John, you recall, who wrote the sweet words :

"Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled."

... I am coming again." And all John ever wrote on this sweet subject never avoided the undeniable fact that the hope of Christ's coming again was only given to comfort those in trouble. This is his whole atmosphere, his whole context; I mean that their bodies may be in trouble but their hearts need *never*

be. How often it has been ignored that John's emphasis is on "heart." "Let not your *heart* be troubled . . . for your bodies are in for it!" Can I prove this? Easily: John xiv opens what is really a long 91 unit of verses that rattle on rejoicingly to their climax in the last verse of chapter xvi, a verse *that is also about trouble*. Here, then, you have that great unit of 91 verses opening with "trouble" and ending with the same idea. What does it mean if not that when he winds up with the warning, "In *the world* ye shall have tribulation," I say, surely the link with the opening "let not your *HEART* be troubled" is obviously just this, that **ALTHOUGH YOUR BODIES ARE IN FOR IT**, oh, no, you need not let your **H E A R T S** be troubled. Had He not explained so lovingly to them that seeing *in* the world they would have tribulation, for that very reason he had spoken to them that *in* Him they might have peace. Whenever did any saved soul find its peace in circumstances, let alone soft, easy ones? Here, then, the simple exegesis of that dear "let not your heart be troubled" word is easily that of a *context of tribulation*, the very fact that is persistently ignored by us. Does He not go on to warn them that "they shall kill you"? And were they not so killed? And if they were to be killed, how could they look for the Lord's return at any moment?

I have reverted to this any-moment phrase, because underlying the subject, with many, is this delusion. Go back to that dear "let not your heart be troubled . . . I am coming again." The soul of frankness it is to say, that thousands see the possibility of our Lord's return, with many, in this fragrant verse. But I can prove that in its severe context it means the very opposite. I mean the *very opposite*, for—

1. When Christ uttered these words, "I come again," you *dare not* add in imagination "come again at any moment," for *He had not yet gone away*, so how could He come back when as yet He had not gone? Moreover,

2. Our blessed Lord proceeded right away to unfold the fact that even *before* He did go, quite

a number of facts must intervene, (a) His rejection, (b) His crucifixion, (c) His rising again. Then

3. Lo, instead of teaching the astounding absurd doctrine that Christ could come out of Heaven THE VERY MOMENT He went into it (mark you, this is what it amounts to), I urge, our Lord taught *per contra* that they must *not* look for Him coming, but that they must wait for the Comforter to come.

I repeat, all this is the severe context of that sweetest word, "I come again," this and more than this, for to crown it all did He not tell them that they must be His witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth? And all this coming of the Comforter was so little a compromise that He Himself called it by the phrase, "I come to you." Just as He had said, "Lo, I am with you," where again the "I" means the Holy Spirit. Thus the whole doctrine of the unity of the Godhead is involved in this recognition of the fact that they were losing nothing but *rather gaining* by the intervention of these pre-notified events by our Lord. In other words, our dear Lord is only coming back in the way He said He would come back, and in no other.

The Times and the Seasons.

This is the reason why that "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons" verse is the most misunderstood in the Bible. For it is notorious that all down the New Testament there are two verbs for "to know"—to know by intuition, and to get to know by experience. And it is this latter our Lord uses: they, at the *very beginning* of the dispensation, were concerned about its end—the time of the end, as it is called. It was that "at this time" that made the Lord give them such a reminder: "It is not for *you* to experience the times of the end when you are only at the beginning of the long dispensation that will see gospelling unto earth's utmost end, for "ye shall be witnesses unto Me all over the world." It is the same word where formerly He said, "what I do you do not even guess what it is now, but you will get to know same by a long painful experience hereafter." At any rate they knew all about the times and seasons already, for He had told them about them, but how could or should they be con-

cerned about the times of the end when the dispensation was only beginning.

And away went the blessed One up into the glory. He went up; they kept looking up until the angel said, "Why stand ye gazing up, for if this same Jesus is to come again it will not be sky-gazing that will bring Him back!" We must bring Him back, for He is coming for a full Bride from earth's utmost end. Ah, too often we use futile phrases about "the coming of the King." But, oh, tragic but, "Why speak ye not a word *about bringing back* the King?" Peter called it "looking for and *hastening* the coming of the Day of God," for he was concerned about **BRINGING BACK THE KING**. Yes, we can bring Him back, because watch how it all ends: I mean, watch the very last lines of the Bible on this bringing-back-the-King theme.

"Even so come, Lord Jesus"

is the last cry ascending to the glory, a proof that this is both the primal and final theme of His word. I have said it is the last *upward* cry, and why so? Ah, now you have struck it, yes, why this last cry, "Even so come"? Because prior to this upward "Come," there is the previous **OUTWARD** (not upward!) "Come" to sinners for salvation. "Let him that is athirst **COME**." World-wide evangelisation leading on to, and culminating in, the final "Come, Lord Jesus," for how can He come until His Bride is ready? And is it not written "The Bride *hath made herself* ready"? And can it be ready unless we seek them out and send others to seek them out? Is this not the Bride *making herself* ready? What else can it mean? Then when "Come" has gone round the world, in true sequence can we utter the other culminating cry "Even so come." Therefore, every time we cry "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," the echo comes down on us from the Throne, "Go, My church, go quickly into all the world." Christ is in us the hope of glory, *hoping His own hope*, and if that hope of His differs from the other I have in the pocket of my coat in the form of a prophetic chart, then so much the worse for the one in my pocket!

For Christ in us "the hope of *glory*" means

that He is glorified in the men God has given Him out of the world. He has given them *de jure* already, so ours it is to make them *de facto* His for all eternity. Is He not going to gather His elect "from the four corners of the earth"? Therefore, does not this postulate a prior evangelisation of the said four corners of the earth? Did not the God who so loved the world also say, "Go ye into all the world"? And if Christ promised to be *with us* unto the end of the age, how can we conceivably be *with Him* in glory before the end of the age?—Reprinted from "Watching and Waiting."

Watching and Waiting is a monthly magazine, the objects of which are:

1. To teach the nearing approach of our Lord's return. *James v. 8.*
2. To hold forth the Truth and to expose and resist error. *Jude 3.*
3. To note passing events in the light of "the Scripture of Truth." *2 Pet. vii. 19.*
4. To unfold the Word of God by comparing Scripture with Scripture. *Acts xvii. 11.*
5. To encourage missionary endeavour, and all service for the Truth. *Acts i. 8.*
6. To comfort and strengthen those who seek to stand with the Lord, apart from abounding lawlessness. *2 Tim. ii. 19.*

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 2/6 per annum post free.