

"GO, YE SWIFT MESSENGERS!"

SEVERAL inquiries and suggestions have been sent to us lately respecting the interpretation of Isaiah 18th chapter. One of these, from our dear Pilgrim-Brother Barton, seems remarkable in several respects. The below interpretation is his, elaborated a little. It will be interesting to all of our readers, and if flaws or objections occur to any of you, we will be pleased to have them called to our attention. We are anxious to set before the Lord's family all that the Master provides as "meat in due season," yet we hesitate specially when the interpretation seems to bring into prominence the work of our Society. We must not, however, shun to declare the whole counsel of God. We submit the following as the most reasonable interpretation known to us of the chapter in question.

The latter part of the chapter – verses 3 to 7 – seem to apply to our day only, thus justifying a similar application of verses 1 and 2. In other words, it is evidently proper for us to expect a fulfilment of this prophecy at the present time. Whatever it refers to, we should be able to discern now or soon, as applicable to events now transpiring.

The first word of the chapter, "Woe," should more properly be translated "Ho!" Thus Prof. Young's translation reads, "Ho! to the land shadowed with wings." This is by many supposed to refer to the United States of America, and the wings are supposed by some to represent the eagle wings so conspicuous on its coins, seals, bank-notes, etc., in its emblem of liberty. To us, however, the wings would more particularly symbolize divine providence caring for this land. Bible students will remember that God frequently uses the eagle and its wings as symbolical of divine care and protection. True, the promise "He shall cover thee with his feathers and under his wings shalt thou trust" (Psa. 91:4), is not made to the United States nor to any earthly nation, but to the Church, the "holy nation": nevertheless,

in a sense the affairs of earthly nations are supervised in the interest of the "peculiar people" whom God is now gathering out of all nations, peoples, kindreds and tongues to be the Bride of Christ.

Glance briefly at the facts. This favored land was unknown to civilization, kept hidden, as it were, until the due time – until it was needed as a home, an outlet for the rapidly overcrowding masses of Europe. More than this, it opened at a time when the Reformation movement was agitating "Christendom" so called, when the study of the Bible was awakening conscience and character and Christian common sense. The awakened class was not generally the rich or the titled or the very comfortable, neither was it the very degraded and ignorant and helplessly poor, but the middle class of European society. These did the thinking and the protesting, and in turn endured the suffering under the persecution engendered. And these were the ones who needed an asylum and who found one in this land shadowed, cared for, by the "wings" of divine providence.

What has been true of the "Pilgrim fathers" and their reasons for settlement here has been true also of others. Of course all have not fled from religious persecution. On the contrary, the majority **[R3404 : page 231]** have sought a new home for the betterment of their temporal interests. But were not even these seeking escape from social and financial oppressions more or less burdensome? Although many feared the influx of so many of the middle and lower classes, yet natural laws and legislation have hindered the coming of the most degraded; and under divine providence the assimilating process has kept pace with the immigration, so that the vast improvement in the manners and appearance is phenomenal, and suggests to us what may be expected on a still broader and deeper scale under the blessed "times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began." – Acts 3:19-21.

Look, too, at the history of this nation. We are far from claiming that it is perfect: we can see much room for improvement in every

direction, and are willing to admit that Americans can still learn some things from other parts of the world – particularly from Great Britain; nevertheless no other nation on earth has such a history. We, as Christians, are opposed to war on general principles, and yet we must acknowledge that some causes of war are more just than others, and of this more just class the wars of the United States seem to have been. True, selfishness has its firm hold upon all the people, and no doubt certain ignoble aims have actuated some of the people in connection with these wars, yet in general, as wars go, they have been, so far as the masses were concerned, just wars – wars having some apparent necessity and not undertaken purely for conquest. In every instance the victory has been with this favored nation, and in no instance has she treated the vanquished ignobly. On the contrary, millions of money were paid to Mexico and Spain when it need not have been paid, but large indemnities might have been forced.

The prosperity of this land is so phenomenal as to be the constant surprise of the world. The poor from all nations have become the wealthiest nation on earth. And, whatever may yet become true, under the changing conditions by which the trusts are **[R3405 : page 231]** obtaining so great a control, this land hitherto has certainly been well illustrated by the statue of "Liberty Enlightening the World" in the harbor of New York City – the gift of that clear-sighted Frenchman, Bartholdi. The great truth thus symbolized is appreciated by but few, however. Few see that the influence of liberty in the United States has been a potent factor in breaking the shackles of serfdom throughout the world. The practical illustration of people governing themselves so successfully, so prosperously, excited the admiration and the envy of their relatives and friends in every part of Europe, and led to the concession of greater liberties everywhere. Great Britain long gave partial suffrage to her people, but only recently, under that influence of Liberty enlightening the world, she gave universal suffrage. The same was the lesson and its results in Germany, Belgium, Italy, Austria and elsewhere in Europe. Even Russia liberated her serfs and will yet be forced by the increasing light

to give her people the ballot. On the whole, then, dear friends, we say that no other land could so well lay claim to being shadowed or protected by the wings of divine providence as can these United States – including Canada, really the same people in character, in interest, in freedom, in prosperity, and in divine favor.

"BEYOND THE RIVERS OF ETHIOPIA."

This is the second statement of the prophecy. In ancient times little was known of the world's size, etc., and Ethiopia was called "the ends of the earth." As for instance, the Queen of Sheba came from Ethiopia, "from the ends of the earth," to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Interpreting the text from this standpoint it would mean: "beyond the waters of the ends of the earth" – a very fitting manner in which to describe America, as yet unknown and not intended to be pointed out particularly at that time. We have, then, the prophecy thus: "Ho! to the land shadowed by wings [divine providences], which is beyond the waters of the ends of the earth." And the next declaration is, – "That sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even upon the waters,

IN VESSELS OF BULRUSHES."

No one ever heard of a vessel of "bulrushes," or rather (literally) of "papyrus" or *paper* as the Revised Version renders the word. Are we to expect the fulfilment of this prophecy in the future – that the steamships of the future will be built of paper? We think not. The tendency is rather toward greater strength, so that wooden vessels are rapidly giving place to those built of steel. Rather we should interpret the language as symbolical – as representing *books* and *tracts* going out in every direction bearing messages as God's ambassadors to all who have an ear to hear their message. By these paper-messages, these divine embassies, all inhabitants of the earth who can see and hear are called upon to note the Lord's ensign about to be set up in his Kingdom, and the trumpet of Jubilee now sounding and to grow more and more distinct as the Jubilee morning ushers in. See verse 3.

"GO, YE SWIFT MESSENGERS."

This language is much more reasonable when [R3405 : page 232] applied to God's message going forth in literature than to worldly ambassadors in paper boats, surely. It is astonishing to those who have any knowledge of the facts how the WATCH TOWER literature, OLD THEOLOGY TRACTS, MILLENNIAL DAWN, etc., are going out as "swift messengers" to all parts of the earth and in many languages. These originate in the land shadowed by the wings of divine providence. Indeed, it is certain that from no other land could they so well be sent: and tolerably certain, too, that had it not been for "Liberty enlightening the world" other nations would not permit the publication of so glorious a "gospel of good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people."

"TO A NATION SCATTERED AND PEELED."

To what nation does the message go? We answer, it goes to the "*Holy Nation*," the Royal Priesthood. (I Pet. 2:9.) Many people of various nations may handle and read these messages, but they are only for the one; and it is doubtful if others will be able to fully understand their message in the present time. Besides, the description fits no other nation. It is "a nation scattered and *polished* [R.V. "smooth"] – to a people terrible [in their experiences] hitherto; a nation meted out [whose course and experiences in life the Lord has measured out for them for their highest welfare] and trodden down [as a part of their necessary experience] whose land the rivers divide [R.V.]." The reference to the rivers may be taken either as suggesting that the river of *death* separates this "*Holy Nation*" from its inheritance on the other side of Jordan; or as in Psalm 46:4.

The swift messengers [or "light messengers" – *Young*] have a message of special comfort and consolation, of interest to every member of this "holy nation" of terrible experiences hitherto; a message that the time of Zion's travail is nearly ended – that soon the birth of the "New Creation" in the "first resurrection" will be complete

and that forthwith all the nations of earth will see the Lord's standard and hear the trumpet of Jubilee. This "holy nation" shall "*at that time*" be brought as a present unto the Lord [Jehovah] of hosts" – to Mount Zion, the Heavenly Kingdom. – Verse 7.

Let us show the Lord more and more our zeal, our love for himself and his wonderful message by our cooperation in the sending forth of his swift paper messengers. "Go, ye swift messengers!" Every year adds to the number who by word and deed say, "Go!" and also adds to the number of these messengers sent forth. God speed them to the accomplishment of his glorious service – present and future – and God bless also the dear Colporteurs and Volunteers engaged with us as his ambassadors in this ministry!

