

# The King's Highway.

And an Highway shall

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Way, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness

The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.—Isaiah 35:8

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## AN EVIL GENERATION SEEKETH AFTER A SIGN.

Rev. B. Carradine.

A sign is defined to be a mark or token of something to be indicated or represented. It can have the weight of confirmation as to what is, or be prophetic and reassuring of what is to be.

The human race in dealing with God and the supernatural have in every age and land insisted on signs and marvels being given them as a foundation of their faith and as a cause for their obedience instead of going simply by the Word of God.

That God in His pity has given them has been no proof that this was the better way and the one more acceptable to Him in man's approach to heaven; but it was and still is an accommodating of the Infinite One to the child intelligence and infantile weakness of a race that has fallen under the blighting power and darkness of sin.

First it is remarkable that when signs were given they rarely, if ever, had the effect and bore the results men expected of them.

For instance God gave Pharaoh ten signs of His will and power, and yet all failed to change his heart and character and were powerless to keep him from the depths of the Red Sea.

When a kind of ecclesiastical insurrection broke out in Israel as to the authority of Moses and Aaron, and God gave the most unmistakable signs as to who were His chosen servants: the budding of the rods, the sprouting of the ground, the visitation of the plague, all alike were powerless to keep such men down as Nadab and Abihu, and Korah, and Dathan and Abiram: or to prevent multitudes following them not their brazen censers, false fire and false teaching to the bitter end.

Gideon asked God for signs, and after they were given the man seemed to be doubtful and fearful as ever. The wool was made wet, and the wool was next made dry, and still Gideon dreaded to attack the vast alien army encamped all over the country.

The sign of the star over Bethlehem was not noticed by a single individual in the country to whose people it was given. Three wise men from the East traveled many hundreds of miles and told the inhabitants of India and Jerusalem that their Savior had been born.

The sign of the Savior's death and Resurrection was equally a failure. Christ had said, no signs shall be given this generation but the sign of the Prophet Jonas—for as Jonah was three days and nights in the deep, so shall the Son of Man be three days and nights in the heart of the earth.

When this token was fulfilled not only did the world fail to take notice, but even the disciples had forgotten the words of the Lord, and utterly lost sight of the sign. They never expected Him to rise again after they beheld His death and burial. And after He arose from the dead, it was with the greatest difficulty they could be convinced that the Savior had returned to life.

Evidently there must be something better for us than signs for the evoking of our faith and the securing of our obedience and service of heaven.

Second, I observe that God never encouraged the looking for and demand for signs.

Some in reply to this would say, what will be done with Mark 16, 17,

18, when Christ says: "And these signs shall follow them that believe: In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them." etc., etc.

In reply to this I would say that the best scholarship has long ago proved that these two verses, and indeed the entire paragraph, is not God's word, but a human interpolation.

If this statement had been made by Christ then He would have contradicted Himself in two distinct ways.

First, He would have been encouraging temptations to violations of divine physical law, in the handling of serpents and the drinking of deadly poisons.

When Satan tempted Him to give a sign of His divinity by throwing Himself down from the top of the temple, His reply to the Adversary was that it was written we should not tempt the Lord God. (To throw one's self from a height expecting divine deliverance would be breaking physical law, presuming on God's goodness, and tempting the Lord our God.)

Now, as Christ thus delivered Himself as to our respect for natural and physical law, how could He utter such things as are attributed to Him. Mark 16th chapter and 17th and 18th verses. Here would be authority for doing what He condemned on another occasion.

Again such proof of Christianity as offered in signs of handling serpents and drinking poison, would put the claims and evidences of His kingdom on the plane and basis of jugglery and slight of hand. For it is well known that on the principle that hand motion is quicker than our vision, there are numbers of showmen who can handle serpents, swallow swords, shoot themselves, drink poison, put coals of fire down their throat, or rather seem to do so, and in this trickery fool an open mouthed, wondering crowd.

So here we have a juggler working Gospel signs, and according to the argument built up by some of them, we should receive them as the accredited messengers of heaven. Surely Christ would never base the claims of His Gospel on such hard manipulations, and so here is a second proof that the 17th and 18th verses are not God's Word.

Still again, if the Savior declared signs to be the necessary thing to convince men of His truth, then He contradicts Himself a third time, when He said an evil and adulterous generation sought after a sign.

Let the reader take the words of the Son of God and ponder over them. He said that a heart that was adulterous and evil wanted and sought after signs.

According to this statement of One who spoke as never man spoke, and never erred in a single word or utterance; what shall we say of those bands of people, who, separating themselves from their brethren, and from the regular means of grace, wait, groan and agonize for hours, not for salvation, not for full salvation, but for signs, marvels, and wonders of a physical character that in suddenly improvised hymns, tongues, gibberish and frenzies, exalt themselves and strike bystanders with fear, awe, envy and amazement.

And what shall we say of the convention recently held near Pittsburg, Penn., where hundreds of such people screamed aloud to God that they might be allowed to speak in tongues.

Think of this appearance of worship and religious devotion and apparent deadness to this world, being gazed upon by the Son of God in heaven, and called adulterous and evil.

We marvel that these people go not see that the "tongues" given at Pentecost were not "unknown" tongues, but languages of earth that the different nationalities present understood—"we hear every man in our tongue wherein we were born." Indeed the tongues were not given so much for a sign, but as a need of the hour for all these dwellers of every nation under heaven might hear the wonderful works of God.

Third, the teaching of the Bible is that there is a better way to know and possess God, and that is by the way of faith and obedience.

The Savior brought this out in His interview with the nobleman who came interceding with Christ that he should "come down ere His son die."

The great reader of hearts looked at the man and saw that old craving in the soul for some optical and physical wonder. So He said "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe,"

What there passed between them we can well imagine, and have to conceive, for the Scriptures could not record all that was said by Christ or to Him.

One thing is certain, that the Savior revealed to him his error, so that when the Son of God spoke the words "Thy son liveth!"—instantly the nobleman believed, and went his way asking for no sign, and wanting nothing better than the words of Christ—"Thy son liveth!"

And next day, twenty-four hours later, in reaching his home he found his son well. One can imagine his gratitude and joy, and with what a peculiar meaning he asked the question—when did he get better? The reply was "yesterday at this hour!" Then the nobleman knew that it was the very moment when Jesus said "Thy son liveth," and he had believed.

The man believed and obeyed, and got what he wanted. It is the same today, if we believe God and do His will, we shall know the doctrine, receive the experience we crave, and live the life that leads to and lands in heaven.

When we think of it we should marvel that men should ask a sign from God after He Himself has spoken. Such a request shows unbelief of His word, and from that very unbelief cut us off and out from that we pray for; for without faith it is impossible to please God.

Let the reader ask himself how it feels after having made a statement, to have some one say, now prove that you have told the truth; give us a sign.

Sometimes it is not possible to give a proof parties being false or dead. Then at such a time we know how it must sound in the ears of God, "Give us a sign."

The great sign of Christianity is beheld in the changed heart and life of its true followers. A physical miracle seemed necessary in the old dispensation, but in the new and present dispensation the great proof and sign of the Gospel is a moral miracle, viz., the utterly changed character and life of a man regenerated, sanctified and kept by the power of God in the midst of all changing circumstances of time, and in spite of all the adverse forces of earth and hell that would break up communion with Christ, separate us

from the love of God and keep us out of the mansion that the Savior has prepared for us in heaven.

One such volume of Christian evidence, bound in human skin, five or six feet in length, bearing on its open pages the decalogue, the Sermon on the Mount and the Thirteenth Chapter of First Corinthians, beats all the signs given this world from the rainbow in the cloud, down to the rending of the rocks on Mt. Calvary at the Crucifixion.

I had rather be such a sign as that, than to drink gallons upon gallons of deadly poison and not die, or speak ten billion words in gibberish or an unknown tongue.

## WITH ONE ACCORD.

Compared to the number making up the apostolic company, the people in the upper room were not few. Luke says: "The number of names together were about an hundred and twenty."

Jesus had commanded them to tarry there until they were endued "with power from on high." This they needed. Jesus saw they did, and they had more than an intimation of the fact.

The secret, we learn, of the general coming of the Spirit upon them was "that they were all of one accord in one place."

We have not seldom thought of how far off the Pentecost would have been if that company had been like so many now. To say nothing of the rank and file of them, suppose the apostles and leading laymen had used the language of the preachers and leaders of our times? Peter is preaching to them and urging the necessity of waiting before God, in something of language like this: "Friends, Jesus has commanded us to tarry 'until we are endued with power from on high.' Let us now wait in earnest prayer and humility before God till it comes. For we certainly need all the equipment possible for this great work in hand; and how evident that a clean heart filled with the Holy Ghost is our best furnishing."

with my conversion; God did no half

But John says: "I am well satisfied work with me." James says: "I believe in more power; but if you want it go to work." Andrew: "These holiness folks are good people, but they are one-sided." Philip: "I believe in the doctrine of holiness, but I do not like Peter's methods." Alpheus: "This urging heart purity as a second work will divide the church." Matthew: "I have great regard for my brethren in the ministry, especially Presiding Elders James and John; they believe in growth in grace." Philip: "These folks who urge the second blessing are impracticable." James the Less: "I do not care to be wise above my seniors in the ministry; if they do not accept this preaching, I do not care to identify myself with it." Thomas: "I do not believe in sanctification any way." Lebaeus: "If we keep our young people, we must not insist on too much religion; young folks have got to have something besides religion all the time." Cleopas: "I do not see why Peter and a few should be right against the larger number." Mary: "I fear this insisting on the baptism with the Holy Ghost will discourage the young converts." Joanna: "I have heard about all I want to hear, about this holiness."

If this popular course in our day had been followed, then would the Pentecost

cost have been? We trow not! This would have been a "one accord" indeed, but not the "one accord" which brought the blessing!

## THE COUNTRY MINISTER'S OPPORTUNITY.

A writer in the June Atlantic has this is say of the opportunity of the country minister: "Occasionally a country minister, nervous and high-strung, feels hampered for a time by his yearly round. He wonders why he cannot arouse in the community the enthusiasm he imagines follows the efforts of the city preachers whose portraits and interviews occupy liberal space in the city papers. He longs for more action, more excitement, and rebels at the weight of his burden. After he has become acquainted with his people after he knows intimately their daily life, and learns their merit and limitations, his view changes. He knows then that the country neighborhood, or the country town, has a high level of morality; that if it does not glow with exaltation, neither does it descend to depths of degradation; that instances of marked wickedness are isolated; that the men and women as a whole are well-behaved, trying to be good citizens, and to bring up their families in honor and good-will. Because he can assist them in this, and can fill so large a place in their daily life, the man with consecration in his heart and good sense in his head has a rare opportunity. It depends entirely upon himself how much he shall accomplish. He may remain in his study; he may polish his sermons in preference to improving his acquaintance with the everyday folk of congregation and neighborhood; he may assume extreme dignity, and dwell aloof; but, if he does so, he is the exception, for the country minister of today is a man among men, filling a man's place in the civic life, while occupying the position of a representative of a higher calling."

## WHY?

Why should we give money to save the heathen abroad when there are heathen in our own country to save? There are other "Whys" equally logical. Why should I give money to save those in other parts of this country when there are needy ones in my own State? Why should I give money for those in other parts of the State when there are needy ones in my own town? Why should I give for the poor in the town when my own church needs money? Why should I give to the church when my own family wants it? Why should I waste on my family what I want myself? Why? Because I am not a heathen, but a Christian.—A. B. Upham.

## HELPING SOMEBODY

When the wife of Oir Bartle Frere had to meet him at the railway station, she took with her a servant who had never seen his master. "You must go and look for Sir Bartle," she ordered. "But," answered the nonplussed servant, "how shall I know him?" "Oh," said Lady Frere, "look for a tall man helping somebody." The description was sufficient for the quick witted man. He went and found Sir Bartle Frere helping an old lady out of a railway carriage and knew him at once by the description.

God honors no drafts where there are no deposits.