

Response and Address of Welcome

On behalf of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, by Brother Horace Hollister, of East St., Louis, Ill., Chairman of the Convention held in Chicago, June 24, 25 and 26. 1910 Convention Report, starting on page 116.

Dear Friends: I hardly know to what I owe the double honor of welcoming you in the name of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, and of responding to the address of welcome by our dear Brother Read. I certainly feel incapable of making an adequate response to the brother's address, and of performing what the brother suggests devolves upon me. However, I must place the responsibility in the hands of the Lord, and ask only that I may be used by him and by you as a servant at this time.

But speaking for the Society, and also for everyone present, and for myself as well, I feel sure that we all appreciate most deeply the efforts of the Chicago friends in our behalf. We cannot imagine how they could have been improved upon, or extended in any direction, or how anything further could have been done for our comfort and pleasure and profit. We can only express this gratitude and appreciation by using these things as Chicago's *ecclesia* would desire we should use them—to his honor and glory to the fullest extent possible, remembering, as our dear brother said, that it is more blessed to give than to receive, and having as our highest heart's desire that we may serve others, and be a blessing to each one with whom we may come in contact during this convention.

An occasion of great spiritual uplift, such as this convention is certain to be to everyone present, is in the nature of a strong stimulant. A good physician prescribes a strong stimulant only under critical conditions. Probably you will realize that we are living under critical conditions at this time, and we earnestly desire that this strong stimulant, this strong spiritual uplift, may strengthen us for the battles which we know we have to fight and are fighting now in our Christian warfare—each one individually as he seeks to overcome the world, the flesh and the adversary.

In thinking about what I should say in response to the brother's words of welcome, the query suggested itself, Why are we here? From the natural standpoint we come from every direction, geographically, characteristically, politically and socially. What is the basis of attraction? What is it that draws us together here on a footing of not only equality but on terms of deepest and most cordial fraternity? We might answer, briefly, with a Scriptural thought, that it is because we are *eagles*—not because we belong to that secret society called the Eagles, but because we belong to the heavenly order of eagles. While welcoming some of those attending the St. Louis convention at the time of the World's fair, at the Union Station, we met different trains coming in, met and greeted the friends and welcomed them to St. Louis, and one of the hotel porters standing there looked on with a good deal of interest at the cordiality of our greetings as train after train

came in, each bearing its quota of the friends. Finally he stepped up to the speaker and said, "What order do you belong to? You all seem to know each other, and all seem to think a great deal of one another, no matter from what part of the of the country you come. What is the name of the society you represent?" I did not tell him it was the heavenly order of eagles; if I had he would not have understood. I simply said, We are attendants in the Bible students' convention, and thus put him off. But we understand and know that the bond of union is something beyond the ken of the fleshly-minded man.

What do we mean when we say we are eagles? We answer that we might divide mankind, in a sense and after a fashion, into three groups, viz., worms, butterflies and eagles. In Job 25:5, 6 we read: "Yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man, that is a worm, and the son of man, which is a worm." What are the worm characteristics? It crawls around in the dirt to get its living; it has shortness of vision, restriction of field of operation; it is limited to the ground, for all its interests are centered in the dust of the earth. This, we recognize, would symbolize and include the vast majority of mankind. How closely, both physically and in every other interest, are they associated with the earth—with the dust; they are of the earth, earthy, as the Scriptures elsewhere declare.

The next is the butterfly class. It is the highest possible attainment of worms to become butterflies. They look up from their dust and see the butterflies going from flower to flower sipping the cup of pleasure and profit of life in various ways, and their thoughts, were they to be given expression, might be, "Oh that I were a butterfly!" Earth has its butterflies—the favored few, the ones who are privileged to sip the cup of pleasure, and pride, and ambition, and profit—the upper class, the upper crust so to speak—supported by the efforts of the great majority. But what are the principal characteristics of the butterfly? The pursuit of enjoyment, of pleasure seeking, for a few brief days, and then death, destruction, forgetfulness. What a figure of frailty, being the sport and buffet of the elements, destined but for a brief day of pleasure, and then what does life amount to?

But there is a third class of which we would speak, and of which we are all desirous of being members—the heavenly order of eagles. In Luke 17 we have these words of our Lord in answer to a question by the disciples: "I tell you that in the night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left." We can imagine the pitch of excitement of the disciples, and their surprise and wonder, and the naturalness of their question, "Where, Lord?" Are we to be separated so suddenly? Where are we going? And the Lord answered in this way, and it has never been understood until the harvest time: "And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." What did he mean? He meant that this heavenly order of eagles, partakers of his holy

Spirit, would be gathered together by a common source of attraction, and it is ours to consider what that is for a few minutes.

In Proverbs 23:5 we have a comparison: “Riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle towards heaven.” One of the eagle characteristics as mentioned in the Scriptures is keen sight; they see the food afar off. And the heavenly order of eagles who are engaged in this enterprise fly toward heaven, treading the upper heights of the atmosphere, rising above and beyond the earth and toward heaven, having keen eyesight as regards the place where food may be found. An eagle flying through the heavens sees the food and he immediately falls toward it. Miles away is another eagle flying around in search of food; he sees this eagle going in the direction of the earth, and he immediately flies in that same direction. Miles away another eagle observes that one, and also flies in the same direction. So in a few hours the eagles from a wide expanse of territory have gathered around the place where the food is found. That was the thing in nature that our Lord referred to.

Concerning the eagles recognizing the presence of food, and gathering toward it from every direction from their lofty habitat, we read in Job 39:27-30: “Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she.” How shall we apply this to ourselves, brethren? Our eyes have been opened by the Lord to the glory of the truth, we have been gathered together from every quarter, and the only bond of attraction has been the wonderful harvest truth, which has become so plain, so grand, so sweet in our eyes. That is the bond of union which has attracted us like a magnet and has drawn us here to enjoy the truth and the fellowship of those who love the truth. It is because we have been borne aloft on eagle wings, above the things of earth, of the dust—above even the flowers of earth and sweet things that grow from the dust, as the butterfly sees it—it is because we have mounted up higher and have been able to see the food from afar, that we are gathered here.

Another characteristic of the eagle is its great age—its long life; and its going suggests strength and vigor. Year after year the eagle is recognized as returning to the same nest; one generation comes and another goes, but the same eagle is recognized. So the eagle is used as a symbol of immortality, which is one of the things we see, and one of the things that is promised to us. And here again the comparison is apt. In Psalm 103 we have this reference to the eagle: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” Our youthfulness of thought, our youthful energies, our youthful activity, are renewed by the Truth. We are energized so that even our mortal bodies are given greater energy in the

service of the Lord than we would have otherwise. The promise in Isa. 40:31 is one we may take to our hearts and enjoy and appreciate, and it will be a source of strength to us: “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint: and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.” We would understand that the figure here would represent the Lord as the great chief eagle. “But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”

There is one other point we desire to consider for a moment in connection with this figure—the treatment of her young by the eagle. Since we infer from His Word that our Lord is compared to the chief eagle in some of his relations to his people, this point is of particular interest to us. In Deut. 32:9 a well-known characteristic of the eagle is suggested: “For the Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.”

Consider for a moment a little eagle’s sensation when this great mother bird, who has been feeding and caring for him, suddenly turns him out of the nest, tears the nest to pieces and sets him out on a branch, shivering, frightened, hardly knowing what is going to happen next. Is she to tear him to pieces also? He cannot understand it. Then she pushes him off the branch and makes him launch out in the air; and as he thinks he is about to be dashed to pieces on the earth there is a rush and a swoop and the mother bird catches him and bears him up to a place of safety. She wants to teach him to fly; it is a necessary part of an eagle’s education. So with us. The Lord stirs up our pleasant nest; he breaks each earthly [tie](#). [It](#) is to teach us how to fly. But underneath all of this, whether we always realize it or not, are the everlasting arms. Each of us must some time go through the experience of the tearing and breaking up of the tender ties of earth, and when we do let us remember that the Lord has promised to guide and control in all our affairs; let us remember that underneath are the everlasting arms; let us remember this symbolic presentation of God’s Word—the eagle who turns her offspring out of the nest into a cold, hard world, in order to teach them to use their wings and fly, so they, too, may become eagles.

And so, beloved brethren, if we complete the course of instruction, if we learn of the great chief eagle, if we follow up the lessons given us, the outcome will be as expressed in Exodus 19:3-6: “And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel.”

We understand here the house of Jacob and the children of Israel are differentiated; it refers to the fleshy house of Israel under the name of Jacob, and the spiritual house under the name of Israel. “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians.” If we keep our eyes open we are going to see what He will do unto the antitypical Egyptians. In fact, we are seeing it right along. “And how I bore you on eagle’s wings and brought you unto myself.” Do you, beloved, desire to be borne up by him, and to trust these eagle wings, and this eagle wisdom? “Now therefore, if you will obey my voice, indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine.”

And so I would supplement the welcome of our dear Brother Read by saying, Welcome, heavenly order of eagles, and may you in the coming three days receive and assimilate the food necessary to strengthen you, that you may mount up on eagle wings, that you may run and not be weary, that you may walk and not faint, until you arrive at the end of the journey and receive that abundant entrance of which Brother Read spoke so eloquently, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now I will side-step the responsibility and put it on your shoulders to make this convention a success and blessing to every one present.