

WRITINGS OF R K CAMPBELL

by R.K. Campbell

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by R.K. Campbell, compiled for study and devotional reading.

76 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 01.01. Chapter I - WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN AND HOW TO BECOME ONE
2. 01.01. Essentials of the Christian Life
3. 01.02. Chapter II - FEEDING AND DEVELOPING THE NEW NATURE
4. 01.03. Chapter III - THE OLD NATURE AND VICTORY OVER IT
5. 01.04. Chapter IV - THE WORLD AND SEPARATION FROM IT
6. 01.05. Chapter V - WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH
7. 01.06. Chapter VI - FRUIT-BEARING
8. 01.07. Chapter VII - SERVING THE LORD
9. 01.08. Chapter VIII - LOOKING FOR THAT BLESSED HOPE
10. 02.00.1. Essentials Of The Christian Life
11. 02.00.2. Table of Contents
12. 02.00.3. Introduction
13. 02.01. Chapter 1: The Church - What is it?
14. 02.02. What Is It?
15. 02.03. A. The Body of Christ
16. 02.04. B. The House of God
17. 02.05. C. The Bride of Christ
18. 02.06. Chapter 2: ITS GIFTS AND MINISTRY
19. 02.07. Introduction
20. 02.08. Source, Channels, and Extent of Ministry
21. 02.09. The Individual Servant and Ministry
22. 02.10 Chapter 3: ITS LOCAL ASPECT - The Ground of Gathering
23. 02.11. A. Scriptural Ground of Gathering
24. 02.12. B. The Divine Gathering Center
25. 02.13. C. The Divine Leader
26. 02.14. D. The Divine Way of Ministry
27. 02.15. E. Elders, Overseers, and Deacons
28. 02.16. F. Divine Authority
29. 02.17. Chapter 3: ITS LOCAL ASPECT - Meetings of the Assembly
30. 02.18. G. Meetings of the Assembly
31. 02.19. 1. For Breaking of Bread and Worship
32. 02.20. 2. Prayer Meetings
33. 02.21. 3. Meetings for Bible Reading and Study
34. 02.22. 4. Open Meetings for Ministry
35. 02.23. 5. Evangelistic Meetings and Efforts
36. 02.24. 6. Woman's Place
37. 02.25. Chapter 3 ITS LOCAL ASPECT - Assembly Discipline
38. 02.26. Discipline - its Necessity
39. 02.27. Object of Discipline

40. 02.28. Manner of Exercising It
41. 02.29. Its Various Forms
42. 02.30. Fleshly and Unprofitable Ministry
43. 02.31. Becoming Spirit and Moral Features
44. 02.32. Wicked Persons
45. 02.33. Doctrinal Evil
46. 02.34. Uncertain Cases
47. 02.35. Chapter 4: Assembly Relationships
48. 02.36. Assembly Relationships
49. 02.37. Unity of New Testament Assemblies
50. 02.38. Bound on Earth
51. 02.39. The Seven Churches of Asia
52. 02.40. Examples of Unity in Israel
53. 02.41. A Circle of Fellowship
54. 02.42. Maintaining Practical Unity
55. 02.43. CHAPTER 5: In The Day Of Ruin
56. 02.44. In The Day Of Ruin
57. 02.45. Guidance from Second Timothy Two
58. 02.46. Outside the Camp
59. 02.47. The Shipwreck of Act_27:1-44
60. 02.48. Remnant Testimony
61. 03.01. The Prophetic History of Christendom
62. 03.02. Table of Contents
63. 03.03. Introduction
64. 03.04. The Church as a Candlestick
65. 03.05. Seven-fold Description
66. 03.06. The Mystery of the Seven Stars
67. 03.07. The Character of the Messages
68. 03.08. Divided Into Three and Four
69. 03.09. The Message to Ephesus
70. 03.10. The Message to Smyrna
71. 03.11. The Message to Pergamos
72. 03.12. The Message To Thyatira
73. 03.13. The Message To Sardis
74. 03.14. The Message To Philadelphia
75. 03.15. The Message To Laodicea
76. 03.16. Conclusion

01.01. Chapter I - WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN AND HOW TO BECOME ONE

Chapter I - WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN AND HOW TO BECOME ONE A. WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

1. One Who Belongs to Christ The word "Christian" is first found in Acts 11:26 - "the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." This name was given by the world to those who acknowledged Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and followed Him. They were identified with the crucified and rejected Christ. A Christian is a "Christ-man", one who belongs to Christ. So 1 Corinthians 15:23 speaks of "they that are Christ's at his coming" and in John 13:1 the evangelist speaks of the believers as "his own", whom the Lord loved unto the end. What a wonderful privilege to belong to the all-glorious, perfect and eternal Son of God and Son of Man, Christ Jesus!

Dividing the word Christian, we get "CHRIST-Is-All- Now." One who accepts Christ as his all-in-all is a Christian in the true sense of the word.

2. One Who is Born Again A Christian is one who is born again by the Holy Spirit, for John 3:3-5 declares, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God . . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." This is a spiritual birth whereby one is born into the family of God by the work of the Holy Spirit. "Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God" (1 Peter 1:23).

One thus born of God has received a new nature which loves God and hates sin. This is "the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24). He has thus been made "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). A Christian, then, is one who has been born again and possesses a new, divine nature which cannot sin (1 John 3:9).

3. A Converted Person The Lord said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). To be converted means to change, and one who has been born again by the Spirit of God experiences a moral change or conversion. Such an one proves the truth of 2 Corinthians 5:17 : "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

4. A Child of God A Christian is a child of God by new birth and faith in Christ. "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26). He thus knows God as his father, so the apostle John wrote: "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father" (1 John 2:13). Wonderful privilege indeed!

5. One Indwelt and led by the Holy Spirit In addition to being born again and possessing a new nature, a Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, the Comforter and divine Teacher. "The Spirit of truth . . . he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:17). "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God" (1 Corinthians 6:19). "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14). "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father"

(Galatians 4:6). This indwelling Spirit gives the believer the affections of a child and the consciousness of being a child of God, bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16).

6. One Assured of Sins Forgiven and Eternal life The born-again believer in Christ is assured of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (1 John 2:12; Acts 10:43). The Word of God, and the Spirit of God within, assure the believer that "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (1 John 5:10-13). Thus a Christian is one who has the blessed assurance of sins forgiven and eternal life. One may be a believer in Christ and lack this assurance and need help as to this, but such assurance is the true possession of a Christian.

Such, dear reader, are some of the essential characteristics of a Christian. Are they true of you? If not, perhaps you need help as to how to become a real Christian, so we pass on to this subject.

B. HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

1. Repentance Toward God

Repentance is necessary in becoming a Christian. The Lord said, "repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15), and "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations" (Luke 24:47). The apostle Peter preached, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," and the apostle Paul testified to Jews and Greeks "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," and "that they should repent and turn to God and do works meet for repentance" (Acts 3:19; Acts 20:21; Acts 26:20).

Repentance is a change of mind, a complete reversal of one's inward attitude towards self, towards sin, towards God, towards Christ and towards the Gospel. It is to give up one's own mind and opinion and to accept God's mind as revealed in the Gospel. One may think that he is a Christian because he has tried to live a good life, belongs to a church, has been baptized and does religious works. Yet none of these and kindred other things will ever make one a born-again Christian, so there must be a change of mind about all this. One must come to God as a repentant sinner and believe on Christ as his Savior to become a Christian.

2. Receive Christ as Personal Savior

"As many as received him, to them gave he power [authority] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). To become a Christian one must receive Christ by faith into one's heart as the sent one of God, as one's own personal Savior. Like Zacchaeus of old, one must "come down" and receive Him joyfully (Luke 19:6).

3. Confession of Mouth and Belief and Obedience of Heart

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9-10). Confess Jesus as your Lord and believe in your heart that He "was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25). If you do this, the Word of God assures you that you are saved. Obey from your heart the Gospel of salvation in Christ and you will be made free from sin and a child of God (Romans 6:17-18).

4. Saved by Grace and not by Works

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). Accept God's gift of free salvation through faith in Christ and you will become a real Bible Christian.

01.01. Essentials of the Christian Life

Essentials Of The Christian Life Talks with Young Believers By R.K.Campbell

01.02. Chapter II - FEEDING AND DEVELOPING THE NEW NATURE

Chapter II - FEEDING AND DEVELOPING THE NEW NATURE In our previous lesson we observed that a Christian is one who has been born again and received a new nature, a divine and holy nature from God. This is the "new man" spoken of in Colossians 3:10 which the Christian has put on. This new nature must be fed and developed if the Christian is to grow and become strong. The apostle Peter exhorts us as to this growth and development. He tells us that we should "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Again he says, "But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18). The Food

Observe that it is "the sincere milk of the word" which is the food that will cause the babe in Christ to grow. The Word of God is the only food for the new nature. The Lord Jesus Christ is the theme of that Word and He is the bread of life for the new man. "Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger . . . I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever" (John 6:35; John 6:51). The Christian must therefore feed on Christ in the Scriptures every day or else he will not grow strong and develop. The Lord said, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (John 6:57). Jesus lived in daily dependence upon the Father and so we must daily eat of Christ in true dependence for sustainment and development of the divine life within us. The new nature can only be nourished and sustained by daily feeding upon Christ in the Scriptures. The new nature instinctively craves for the Word of God as food, and there is nothing else in the whole world that will feed and strengthen the new nature outside of the Word of God. Everything else is food for the natural man and feeds our old sinful nature.

Like the Children of Israel in Exodus 16:1-36 we need to gather up and eat fresh manna every day if we would be healthy and strong Christians. God said to Israel that He fed them with manna daily "that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live" (Deuteronomy 8:3). We also need to learn this lesson that as Christians we cannot live by material food only; we must have spiritual food for our souls and live by the words that have come from God which are found in the Holy Bible. So let us read our Bibles each day and meditate upon and digest what we read.

Breathing the Air of Prayer A newborn babe also needs air to sustain its life and likewise the newborn babe in Christ needs to breathe the air of prayer for sustainment of spiritual life. Prayer is the breath of spiritual life and indicates the presence of divine life. Prayer is the expression of dependence upon God and this dependent leaning upon God is an inborn, natural instinct of the divine nature of the Christian. Prayer, then, is the natural outflow and utterance of our new nature and necessary for its growth and development.

Prayer brings one into the presence of God and promotes communion with Him. Without communion with God, spiritual life cannot be sustained and renewed. "They that wait upon, the Lord, shall renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31). When we read the Bible, God talks to us and when

we pray we talk to God. Both are necessary for communion, growth and development of the new nature. The Psalmist said, "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud" (Psalms 55:17). Daniel "kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God" (Daniel 6:10). So we should also do if we would be healthy Christians; do not begin the day without reading your Bible and praying to God. If you neglect to do so, you will soon be a defeated, starving Christian. Besides regular times of prayer each day, the believer is exhorted to be "continuing instant in prayer" and to "pray without ceasing" (Romans 12:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:17). The dependent attitude of prayer should always characterize the child of God.

Walking in the Spirit

We observed in our previous talk that a Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God; He is the power for the Christian life and strengthens the new nature "Strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man." (Ephesians 3:16). This divine Person who indwells the believer would ever put into action the desires and instincts of the new nature. He will guide us and manage all our affairs if we let Him control our lives and yield to His leading. Therefore we are exhorted to "walk in the Spirit" and to be "led of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16; Galatians 5:18). This means submission of heart and obedience to the promptings of the Holy Spirit within us and to the Word of God. This is a vital essential of the Christian life, to do otherwise means defeat and failure in the Christian pathway. The Holy Spirit would ever encourage the believer in the desires and activities of the new nature. It is His special work to guide us into all truth and to take of the things of Christ, the living Bread and the living Word, and show them unto us (John 16:13-15). He would teach us to pray too - "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit"; "praying in the Holy Ghost" (Ephesians 6:18; Jude 1:20). Thus we must be walking in the Spirit if we desire that our new nature be fed and developed. If a believer disobeys the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, the Holy Spirit is grieved and quenched and He is not free to promote the desires of the new nature (Ephesians 4:30). He can only convict such an one of sin and lead him to self-judgment and confession of sin. Walking in the power of the ungrieved Spirit, then, is vitally essential for the Christian life.

Fellowship with Christians

"If we walk in the light, as he is the light, we have fellowship one with another" (1 John 1:7). Fellowship and companionship with other Christians are also vital for feeding and developing the divine life. The new nature desires fellowship and companionship with God and with fellow believers. Association with fellow Christians draws out the new nature and strengthens the divine desires. "Two are better than one . . . for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10). If one is weak in the faith and liable to fall, companionship with stronger Christians will lift him up and strengthen him. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend" (Proverbs 27:17). This is especially true in Christian companionship.

We are told in Hebrews 10:24-25 to "Consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." By associating with other Christians we stir up each other unto love and good works and in attending Christian meetings our souls are fed together and built up in the faith. When two or three gather together unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, He is there in their midst (Matthew 18:20), and special blessings are obtained thereby which strengthen and develop the new nature. Therefore fellowship in the light with other

Christians is vital for the Christian life.

Exercising the New Nature As in physical life, so in spiritual life, exercise and activity are necessary for growth and development. By exercise and use of our physical members they grow, develop and become strong. So it is also in spiritual things; as we exercise ourselves in the desires and activities of the new nature, we grow, develop and become strong in the Lord.

Young Timothy was told to "refuse profane and old wives' fables," which only feed the old sinful nature, "and exercise thyself rather unto godliness" (1 Timothy 4:7). The Christian needs to engage in daily spiritual exercises to be in a healthy state of soul. He must train his members unto godliness. The eyes, ears, mind, tongue, heart, hands and feet should be directed in the way of godliness and exercised therein daily. The Christian should practice seeing, hearing, thinking, speaking, feeling and working for the Lord each day. The more one does so, the more natural such activities will become and the stronger one will be in these spiritual exercises of the new nature. Our eyes and ears should be on the lookout for some service to be done for the Lord, for some opportunity of witnessing for Him. The heart needs to be trained in compassion for lost souls and the Lord's Own and in willingness to serve God and man. The mind and tongue need to be exercised in speaking for the Lord and the hands and feet trained in activities of love for Christ. Thus the new nature will be developed by spiritual exercises.

01.03. Chapter III - THE OLD NATURE AND VICTORY OVER IT

Chapter III - THE OLD NATURE AND VICTORY OVER IT
Discovery of a sinful nature In the happy enjoyment of the new nature with its desires Godward, the young Christian is soon disturbed by the discovery of evil still present in his heart. In spite of love for the Lord and desires to please Him, the young convert finds that evil desires are also in his heart and mind. This is a disappointing but true discovery which every Christian has to make for it is verily true that the evil nature which we were born into the world with still remains in the Christian after being born again of the Spirit of God.

Experience of Romans 7:1-25 In reading Romans 7:1-25 we find that our experience of the discovery of evil within us is somewhat like that described in this chapter where the personal experience of what the flesh in the renewed man is under law is delineated, "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:21-23). The converted person thus discovers that he has two natures, the new nature of the inward man and the evil nature of sin. One is human and polluted, the other is from God and holy and sinless.

One also learns that when one does what the new man hates, "it is no more I [the converted person] that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Romans 7:17). The sinful nature that still dwells in the believer is the source of all the evil thoughts, feelings, passions and actions which the new nature hates.

Furthermore, the believer experiences that his evil nature is not any better since he was saved than it was before salvation and that it cannot be improved upon or changed. "The carnal [fleshly] mind, is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). We have to learn the lesson of Romans 7:18 "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." This is a hard lesson to learn, but it must be learned if one would have settled peace about the old nature and have victory over it.

Crucified with Christ In Romans 6:6 we read: "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with (him), that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin" (New Trans.). Here is something vital which God would have us know, that "our old man has been crucified" with Christ. The term "the old man", found but three times in Scripture, expresses what the believer was in his past state as a responsible sinner - "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Ephesians 4:22). This state has been met and judged in the death of Christ upon the cross. Christ has so fully accomplished deliverance for the believer that the believer can identify himself by faith with Him on the cross and see in His death his own death as a responsible sinner before God. Thus we can say with the apostle Paul, "I am crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20). By faith we can look back to the cross and say, "Our old man has been crucified with Christ". This gives rest of heart and a true sense of power against sin. "Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after

the image of him that created him" (Colossians 3:9-10). This is an accomplished fact for the Christian and as we realize this by faith the practical result will be "that the body of sin [indwelling sin] might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin" (Romans 6:6). Power to overcome indwelling sin is by believing these truths of the death of the old man and the existence of the new man before God. Because God says, "ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3), the believer mortifies, that is, he puts to death practically, everything that is inconsistent with the death of Christ (Colossians 3:5).

"God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). In the Person of Christ, our substitute on the cross, God condemned sin in our flesh, our sinful nature, and judged it there once and for all. He not only died for our sins, but for that root principle of evil in us, sin in the flesh, and has "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26). The condemnation of sin in the flesh by the just judgment of God is the doing away with it before God by Christ's sacrifice. This act is effective for everyone that believes in Jesus who accomplished it.

Thus we are not to try to improve, eradicate or "burn out" the old nature of sin within us as some would teach. We should accept God's condemnation and judgment of sin in the flesh in the cross of Christ and rejoice that it too has been put out of His sight. He does not forgive sin in the flesh, though He forgives our sins, but has judged and condemned it. A New Standing In the cross of Christ our old standing before God as children of Adam's lost race came to an end. There we died under the judgment of God executed upon Christ our substitute. As believers in the Savior who died for us, we are now associated with the risen and glorified Christ and have a new position before God in Him. God no longer sees us as standing before Him in our sinful nature. He no longer sees us in connection with the condemned life of the first Adam, but in the risen life of Christ the last Adam. He is not looking at our sinful nature which the young convert is some times occupied with and so distressed about. God sees the believer IN CHRIST, "accepted in the beloved" and "complete in Him" (Ephesians 1:6; Colossians 2:10). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). This is the Christian's new standing before God and the realization of this is a great comfort to one troubled by the discovery of his sinful nature and occupation with it. Knowing that God is done with our old man and does not see us as such anymore, helps us to be done with the old nature too and not to be further occupied with it.

Reckon Yourselves Dead unto Sin

Knowing that God reckons our old man as dead with Christ, we are told: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ Our Lord" (Romans 6:11). We are to reckon like God does, owning that we have died with Christ and are risen with Him and thus dead to sin.

Though our old nature is still very much alive with in us, we should refuse to listen to it or obey it when it would make its voice heard, making us to think this or that or telling us to do what would be displeasing to God. We must treat it as a dead person that has no right to live or be listened to. It must be kept in the place of death and we must ever remember God's death sentence upon it. This is the way to practically reckon ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God.

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Romans 6:12). Though sin still dwells in us, we are not to let it reign in us or rule there. We should not obey it in its lusts.

Yield Yourselves unto God

"Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Romans 6:13). Here is the third point of vital instruction from Romans 6:1-23 - yield your members unto God as servants to righteousness. Once, we were the servants of sin, but now we are made free from the bondage of sin by our Savior and therefore should yield ourselves to Him and serve righteousness. We need to recognize the Lord's claims upon us and realize that we are His and should serve Him. The apostle tells us: "ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). As one yields oneself to the Lord and serves Him, one, while doing so, escapes temptation to serve the flesh, for one cannot do two different things at the same time, that is, serve the Lord and the flesh too. Therefore it is good for the believer to do something for the Lord and get his heart occupied with Him and His things. In doing so he is yielding his members as instruments of righteousness unto God and will find himself above the power of the evil nature.

Power in the Holy Spirit The power to put down the old nature and keep it in the place of death is found through the Holy Spirit, "if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:13 New Trans.). We find that we are helpless in ourselves to put down the evil nature within us for it is stronger than the new man. But, by the help of the indwelling Spirit of God, who strengthens us with might (Ephesians 3:16), we are able to put to death the evil deeds of the flesh and keep it under control. This is the secret of victory over the old and sinful nature - victory by the power of the Spirit.

We are exhorted to "Walk in the Spirit [heed the voice of the Spirit and do through His power what He tells us to do], and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). The Holy Spirit in the believer is like a strong man living in a house where there is a bad roomer that must be kept under control. This bad roomer is stronger than the owner of the house and overcomes him, but the strong man helps the owner keep the bad roomer locked up and under control. The bad roomer we may liken to our evil nature. If we let the Holy Spirit have control of our lives, He will keep the old nature down and give us victory so that we do not walk after the flesh but after the desires of the new nature.

Practice Self-Judgment and Confession

If one has listened to the flesh, yielded to its desires and done evil, the Spirit of God within is grieved, communion with God is broken and one feels miserable. The Spirit of God is then not free to act for us in putting to death the deeds of the body, but is grieved because we have slighted Him and given way to the flesh. The only way of restoration is to judge ourselves before the Lord and confess to Him our wrong. "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Corinthians 11:31). "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Self-judgment and confession should be practiced daily for we will always find something in our hearts and lives to judge before the Lord.

When we judge ourselves we take sides with the Lord against ourselves and against what is displeasing to Him and have the promise that He will forgive and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we do not practice self-judgment, God must chasten and judge us "that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:32).

Maintain a Good Conscience

Connected with self-judgment is the maintenance of a good conscience which is very necessary for victory in the Christian life. The apostle Paul said, "herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16). The only way we can have a good conscience before God and man is to walk in the truth and if we have failed in this, self-judgment and confession must be exercised before God and man. "Maintaining faith and a good conscience; which (last) some, having put away, have made shipwreck as to faith" (1 Timothy 1:19 New Trans.). If a believer gives up seeking to maintain a good conscience, he will make shipwreck of faith and have a ruined Christian life and testimony.

"If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:20-22). Such is the happy result of a good conscience before God, and the opposite is true, if a believer's conscience and heart condemn him he must constantly reckon himself dead unto sin, yield himself unto God, walk in the Spirit, and practice self-judgment if he would enjoy a good conscience toward God and man. Do not Feed the Old Nature

Ere closing this talk, we would remind our readers that, if our old man is crucified with Christ, and our old nature should be kept in the place of death, it follows, then, that we should not feed it, but rather starve it. Romans 13:14 tells us to "make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof." If we heed the cravings of the old nature and feed it with what it likes, we make provision for the flesh to fulfill its lust, it is thereby strengthened and becomes strong and will soon reign over us.

We saw in a previous talk that we need to feed the new nature so that it will grow strong and develop. In doing so we will starve the old nature, for what feeds the new nature will starve the old nature, as they each desire different food. As an illustration, we may picture a dog and an eagle chained together. What would feed the dog would starve the eagle and the dog would have the mastery, but if the eagle were fed, the dog would starve and the eagle would become strong and mount up on high, carrying the dog with it, so with ourselves if we feed the old nature or the new nature.

Summary The foregoing subjects which we have discussed in connection with "The Old Nature and Victory Over It" are, we believe, some of the vital and Scriptural essentials for a happy and victorious Christian life. The true Christian life can only be lived and enjoyed as the Christian realizes that the old man has been crucified with Christ and that his sinful nature has been condemned by God at the cross, and as he reckons himself dead unto sin and yields himself unto God and walks in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. As taught by the Spirit, the believer realizes his new position of acceptance before God and man by walking in the truth and practicing self-judgment and confession in regard to any failure therein.

01.04. Chapter IV - THE WORLD AND SEPARATION FROM IT

Chapter IV - THE WORLD AND SEPARATION FROM IT The world which we shall speak about in this lesson is not our material or created world but the world order and system which Satan has built up on this material earth. In the Greek language, in which the New Testament was originally written, there are three different words used which are all translated "world" in our King James English Bible. They are (1) "aion" which means "an age, time, dispensation," (2) "kosmos," meaning "order, form, fashion, arrangement," (3) "oikoumene" meaning "the habitable earth or land." The majority of the verses in our Bible which speak of the world have reference to the world order and system which man under Satan has built upon earth - "kosmos." It is this world system which the Christian is called to walk in separation from.

Satan, its Prince and God In John 12:31; John 14:30 the Lord spoke of Satan as "the prince of this world" (kosmos) and in Ephesians 2:2 we are told that "in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." The course and order of the world system we are surrounded by is after Satan who is its' ruler and the prince of the evil powers of the air that work in the unsaved.

2 Corinthians 4:4 speaks of Satan as "the god of this world" or "this age" (aion), and in Galatians 1:4 we read of "this present evil world" (aion) or "age." Because Satan is its head and god and has built up its great system and orders its course, it is an evil world or age which we live in. "The whole world lies in the wicked one," John tells us (1 John 5:19, New Trans.). The Character of the World System In 1 John 2:15-17 we are told: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world [kosmos]. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the World. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Here we have clearly set forth the character of all that is in the world which Satan has built up. Every thing in it appeals to one or the other of the three lusts of fallen man's evil nature - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the lust of the pride of life. When Satan tempted Eve and Christ, he appealed to these three lusts in his temptations (see Genesis 3:6; Matthew 4:1-10). Eve responded and sinned but Satan found in Christ no response to his temptations, for there was no sinful nature in Him. The things in the world system are not of God our Father and will pass away. They appeal to our evil nature, which we saw in our last talk we are to reckon ourselves as dead with Christ, therefore the Christian must walk in separation from Satan's evil world and all its enticement if he would have a happy and victorious Christian life. The things of this world system, which Satan would get us occupied and taken up with, are temporal, for time, and will pass away. "The world languisheth and fadeth away" (Isaiah 24:4), "but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." The new nature, which the Christian is to walk after, does not love Satan's evil world; it loves God the Father and seeks to please Him, and since the world is not of the Father, but after Satan, the Christian with a divine nature does not desire to walk after the things of this evil world

and cannot be happy in any fellowship with it, therefore the apostle says, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." A true Christian is not characterized by love for the world. The World Crucified Christ When the Lord Jesus came into the world He had created, the world (kosmos) knew Him not (John 1:10). Later Jew and Gentile, religious and irreligious, united together in rejecting and crucifying Him. The title which was put upon His cross was written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, the languages of the religious world, the learned world and the political world of that day. Thus the whole world system united in rejecting their Creator and crucifying Him. In speaking of the wisdom of God in 1 Corinthians 2:7-8, the apostle says, "Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Thus the princes of this world are spoken of as ignorant of Christ, the wisdom of God, and as those who crucified Him. In John 15:18-25 the Lord speaks of the world hating Himself, His Father and His own without a cause. This attitude of the world towards Christ and God is still the same. It has never repented of the terrible crime of crucifying Christ, therefore this world system is stained with the blood of God's beloved Son, and the Christian who loves the Lord must walk in separation from it if he would be true to His rejected Savior. The Cross Separates us from the World

Since the world gave Christ the cross of rejection and crucifixion, how then can the Christian love or be one with this evil world system that has Satan as its god and prince and hates Christ and His Father and His people? Friendship with such a world is enmity with God as James 4:4 tells us - "whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." The apostle Paul said that by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ the world was crucified unto him and he unto it (Galatians 6:14). The cross of Christ should stand as an impassable and immovable barrier between the world and the Christian - as that which forever separates him from it. The Christian is not of the World In John 15:19 the Lord tells us, "because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." The Lord has chosen us out of this world system, and in saving our souls He "delivered us from the power of darkness," from Satan's kingdom of this evil world, and "translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). Our citizenship and associations of life are in heaven (Php 3:20; Rev. Ver.). The Christian thus belongs to a different world and kingdom of which Christ is the center and circumference and is therefore not of this present evil world system. The Christian is in the world but not of it. He is like a ship in the water. The ship is made for the water and to be useful in it, but if the water gets in the ship it will soon sink. So with a Christian; he is to be useful to the Lord and precious souls in the world, but the world which he is in must not get into his heart so that he becomes part of it, if it does, he will make shipwreck of the faith (1 Timothy 1:19). So the Lord prayed in John 17:15-16 : "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." The Lord's desire and prayer for His own is that they may be kept from the evil of the world system, that they might truly and practically be "not of the world." May we, then, dear Christian reader, keep ourselves "un spotted from the world" (James 1:27) in answer to our Lord's desire and prayer. A Separate People The Lord would thus have His people separated unto Himself and walking apart from this evil world which crucified Him and hates both Himself and His Father. This is the way the new nature of the believer would go and the way the indwelling Spirit would lead us. This is a vital essential of the Christian life and no child of God can prosper in his soul or really enjoy Christ and his heavenly inheritance if he is not walking in practical separation from the spirit and course of this present evil world.

God's people throughout the Bible, in every age, were called upon to be a separated people unto the Lord. The following Scriptures emphasize this: Exodus 33:16 ; Leviticus 20:24; Ezra 10:11; Nehemiah 9:2. "Ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine" (Leviticus 20:26), is a typical example of God's call to His people of old, and to us today, to walk in separation from the world and those who are not His. No Unequal Yokes with Unbelievers

If one would walk in separation from the world, one cannot be unequally yoked with those who are unbelievers and thus part of Satan's system. 2 Corinthians 6:14 gives us definite instructions as to this: "Be ye not un equally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" When two are yoked together they are to pull and work together as one. But how can a Christian walk together with an unbeliever? They are as different as light and darkness. To be yoked together thus is an unequal and unhappy yoke. Therefore, any business, religious or marriage yoke of Christians with unbelievers is an unequal yoke with the world and is to be shunned because it is very detrimental and harmful to one's Christian life and testimony. Many believers have not heeded the above instruction and have found out to their great sorrow how such unequal yokes have made them to suffer and hindered them in their Christian life.

Watch Your Companionships

What leads to unequal yokes with the world is the first step of companionship with the world, with the unsaved. Therefore, it is most important that Christians be very careful as to whom they have companionship with. The Psalmist said, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts" (Psalms 119:63). Make the Lord Jesus your chief companion and all those that love and fear Him and keep His word your friends and companions. We are affected by the company we keep. "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33). "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Proverbs 13:20). If a believer has companionship with those who are of the world and love its evil course, he will soon be worldly minded and mixed up with the world system himself.

Having considered what has been presented in this lesson, we trust the reader will see that separation in every way from this present, evil world system is a vital essential of the Christian life and that one cannot enjoy the abundant life in Christ if friendship with the world is practiced. Separation from the world should be the natural result of communion with Christ and walking in the Spirit and after the new nature. Devotedness to the Savior and the enjoyment of Himself is the spring and power for separation from the world. May we know more of it in living power.

01.05. Chapter V - WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

Chapter V - WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH The apostle Paul gives us in Php 3:3 three characteristics of Christianity. There we read, "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Thus worshipping God in the spirit and rejoicing in Christ Jesus is a real characteristic and essential of the Christian life. This life is from God and rejoices in Him as its source of life and of every blessing. In the delineation of the Christian's position and blessings, as given in Romans 5:1-11, that which is given as the highest step in the ladder, as it were, is: "we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we now have received the atonement" (reconciliation - New Trans.). This joy naturally expresses itself in worship and praise to Him who is acknowledged as the Giver and Source of all its joy and blessings.

What is Worship

Worship is the grateful and joyful response and overflow of the heart to God when filled with the deep sense of the blessings which have been given from Him. It is giving Him the honor, adoration, praise and thanksgiving which is His due because of what He is in Himself and because of what He has done and does do for us. Praises, thanksgivings and the making mention of the attributes of God and of His acts in the attitude of adoration is what constitutes worship. The meaning of the Greek word for worship (*proskuneo*), which is used in most of the New Testament, is: "to do reverence or homage by prostration - to bow one's self in adoration." In John 4:24 we are told that "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" As God is a Spirit, spiritual worship is all that He accepts. He must be worshipped "in spirit and in truth." Spiritual worship is in contrast with religious forms and ceremonies which the unregenerate man is capable of. These are not that spiritual worship which God is looking for. True Christian worship is the expression of the new, inward, divine life in the energy and power of the Holy Spirit, and manifested in utterances of praise, adoration and thanksgiving. This sets aside all human formulas, imposing ceremonies and rituals practiced by human will and the energy of religious but unregenerate man. The Father Seeketh Worshippers

"The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him" (John 4:23). God is known as Father by His children and worshipped as such in spirit and in truth. He has made Himself known as a Father seeking and adopting children to worship Himself. God has gone out in His own redeeming love in quest of worshippers, seeking them under the gentle name of "Father," and placing them in a position of nearness and freedom before Himself as the children of His love. This is the blessed place the Christian is brought into, and now our loving Father is looking for the worship of His blood-bought children. Let us, then, freely give Him daily the praise, thanksgiving and worship which is due Him and which He is seeking from His children.

Cultivate the Spirit of Praise The psalmist tells us: "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning,

and thy faithfulness every night" (Psalms 92:1-2). The apostle, writing to the Hebrew believers, says: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name . . . for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:15-16). So also the apostle Peter writes: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).

These Scriptures, and many others, tell us of the spirit of praise and worship that should daily characterize the Christian. Let us, then, cultivate this spirit of thanksgiving and worship which is the natural outflow of the divine nature and an essential characteristic of the Christian life. Where are the Nine? The Lord asked this question of the one leper out of ten who returned to Him and fell at His feet to give Him thanks when he discovered that he was cleansed of his leprosy. "Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that return to give glory to God, save this stranger" (Luke 17:17-18). This shows how the Lord appreciated the worship of this cleansed leper and how keenly He felt the ingratitude of the other nine. May we not be like the nine but like the one who worshipped His Savior.

"This do in Remembrance of Me"

Connected with giving the Lord the praise and worship which He seeks and which is His due, there is the special request, which He has asked of us, and that is that we remember Him in His death for us by eating the bread and drinking the cup of the Lord's Supper. "He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:19-20). "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

It is therefore the Lord's desire that we often partake of the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Himself and of His atoning death for us and to give Him praise and worship therewith as our Savior, Redeemer and Lord. This is a vital essential of the Christian life and one the believer cannot neglect if he would be found pleasing his Savior and prospering in his soul. Are you, dear young believer, obeying the Lord in this special request and remembering Him in His own appointed way?

01.06. Chapter VI - FRUIT-BEARING

Chapter VI - FRUIT-BEARING In John 15:1-27 the Lord spoke to His disciples about bearing fruit for the glory of God. He told them that He was the vine, His Father was the husbandman and that they were the branches. He also said: "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit... Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:5, John 15:8). Then He told them: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16). From the above words of our Lord we learn that the purpose of our calling and salvation is that we should bring forth fruit to the Father's glory. To this end we have been chosen and ordained. Our Father is looking for fruit to His delight and satisfaction in His children and "every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2). Thus we may be sure that bearing fruit for God is a vital essential of the Christian life. The Lord has saved us for this very purpose and every Christian ought to be exercised about this important and practical subject of fruit-bearing.

What is Fruit-Bearing?

Fruit-bearing is a manifestation of life and characteristics of that life. A seed is planted which contains life and its certain characteristics. It grows into a plant which produces fruit of the same nature and character as the life in the seed that was planted. There is a reproduction of life and nature which is manifested in fruit. The seed of an orange tree, if planted, will produce another orange tree with its characteristic fruit. The seed of a lemon tree that is planted will produce another lemon tree which bears lemons as fruit. So in the Christian life, fruit-bearing is a reproduction of the life and characteristics of Christ in the believer. Fruit-bearing is more what one is than what one does; it is being something for God rather than doing something for Him. Bearing fruit for God has to do with character and Christ-likeness rather than service.

Christ the true vine which the believer is to abide in, would reproduce Himself in those who thus dwell in communion with Him. The Father, the divine husband man, looks for the life of Christ and His characteristics to be reproduced and manifested in His children. This is the fruit He is seeking for His satisfaction and delight. He has predestinated us "to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:29) and desires that "Christ be formed in you" (Galatians 4:19). Thus the apostle Paul realized that the purpose of God, in all the troubles of life he and we are called to pass through, is "that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (2 Corinthians 4:10). When Christ is seen in our lives, that is fruit to His and the Father's glory. In Galatians 5:22-23 we are told that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." All these nine-fold virtues were perfectly exemplified in the life of Christ as fruit to the Father's glory and delight. The indwelling Spirit of God would also produce this beautiful cluster of nine-fold fruit in the life of every believer that abides in Christ the true Vine. These Christ-like virtues are not spoken of as fruits, but as "fruit of the Spirit." They are, as it were, all in one bunch like a cluster of grapes - one fruit of nine different flavors. It is a complete

harmonious development by the Spirit of Christian character, in which every part is in evident relationship with the rest. Love is the first mentioned and shines out in them all and strings them together as it were. The first three of the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace) are Godward and for His eye. They may be called internal fruit. The next three (longsuffering, gentleness, goodness) are of a relative character, the result of the first three filling the heart. They will be manifested towards one's brethren, the world, and even one's enemies. All can see these and appreciate them. The last three (faith, meekness, temperance or self-control) are personal and necessary for the soul's sustainment in passing through the world with its trials and testings.

Requirements for Fruit-Bearing In John 15:1-27 where fruit-bearing is especially spoken of, the Lord gives the conditions necessary for bearing fruit. In John 15:4-5 we read: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

Here we learn that our abiding in Christ and He in us is the prime necessity for fruit-bearing. Every true believer is united with Christ and is in Him positionally as a branch is with a vine, and the very life that flows through the Vine - Christ - flows through the branch the believer, thus the power to produce fruit for God is in Christ, the Vine, and in us also as branches in Him. But we are responsible to abide in Christ practically and this what is stressed in John 15:1-27 as necessary for fruit-bearing.

We cannot bring forth fruit for God of ourselves; it is not by our efforts that fruit for Him is borne, it is by simply abiding in Christ in practical and living communion with Him the life-giving Vine that fruit to His glory is produced in the Christian. If a soul dwells in Christ, Christ dwells in that soul and that which is in Him is communicated to that one just as the sap flows from the vine into the branches. In abiding in Christ we draw strength continually from Him and fruit-bearing follows as a result of abiding. In the natural world there is no activity involved in fruit-bearing, but quiet rest and drinking in of the rain and sunshine and partaking of the life-giving sap in the vine. So in the spiritual realm fruit for God is produced by quiet communion and rest in Christ, by keeping in practical and constant touch with Him in the sense of our need and inability to do anything without Him. It is by occupation with Christ that fruit is borne for Him rather than by employment and service for Him or efforts on our part to produce fruit pleasing to Himself. A spirit of complete dependence upon Christ is necessary for abiding in Him and fruit-bearing. "Without me ye can do nothing" the Lord would remind us. It is only as we realize our nothingness and make Christ our sole resource and confidence and lean upon Him in constant dependence that we will abide in Him and bear fruit.

Another point is mentioned in John 15:7. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." It is necessary that Christ's words abide in us and control our thoughts and desires if we would have confidence to ask what we will and receive power for fruit-bearing. When we truly abide in Him and His words abide in us, our mind, will and thoughts are formed by Christ's words and we get guidance of heart and have confidence to ask of the Father in prayer. Thus we get the power of abiding and fruit-bearing by His Word abiding in us. In John 15:3 the Lord said, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." The Word of God has a purging and cleansing power upon our souls and the Christian must have

daily recourse to it if he would abide in Christ and bear fruit. To abide in communion with the Lord there must be the constant cleansing action of the Word of God in our hearts which are so easily defiled by the activity of the evil nature within us and by the evil about us. We cannot abide in Christ if sin is allowed in our hearts, therefore we ever need the sanctifying and cleansing power of the Word of God upon our souls to keep us from sinning and defilement. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalms 119:11). In John 15:10 another point follows: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." Here we have obedience to the Lord's commandments as a condition necessary to abide in His love. We are not only to have His Word abiding in us, but to walk in obedience to it even as Christ obeyed His Father's commandments and enjoyed its fruit of abiding in His love. Thus a spirit of simple obedience to the will of God as revealed in His Word is necessary for abiding in Christ and fruit-bearing.

Then follows the blessed result of having Christ's joy remaining or abiding in us and our joy made full as John 15:11 indicates. The Lord had perfect joy in the Father. His joy was in bringing forth fruit to the Father's glory and He is here showing us how in fruit-bearing we can have joy and blessedness down here.

Summing up, we thus learn that the divine requirements for fruit-bearing are abiding in Christ in living communion, a spirit of complete dependence upon Him, His Word abiding in us as a cleansing and formative power begetting confidence to ask in prayer, and walking in obedience to His commandments which results in abiding in His love and having His joy remaining in us. The Care of the Husbandman

Another important item in the subject of fruit-bearing is the care of the divine Husbandman for the branches and His work of purging them that fruit and more fruit might be borne to His glory. The Lord said: "my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." (John 15:1-2).

It is the Father who is the husbandman and as such He looks after the branches in tender love and watchful care. He combines perfect wisdom and love in His treatment of the branches and knows how to cause them to bear fruit and more fruit. The fruitless professor He removes and the fruitful one He purges and cleanses so that more fruit may be borne. He cuts away out of our lives everything that hinders our being like Christ and bringing forth fruit to His delight. He may use the pruning knife to cut away superfluous things in our lives so that more and better fruit may be produced in us. He chastens us and may put us through the fires of affliction that the dross may be removed from us and that "we might be partakers of His holiness." The process may be painful and grievous, "nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:10-11). So when trials come, perhaps of sickness and suffering, or stress of circumstances, or bereavement, we may be sure it is the Father's loving care for us as a fruit-branch and that it is His purging process to make us more fruitful for Himself. Sometimes He has to say as in Song of Solomon 4:16 : "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." The chilly north winds of adversity and the south winds of grace and love are combined to blow upon the Father's vineyard so that the fragrance of fruit sweet to His taste may flow out. Then follows the pleasing words, "Let

my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits," and "at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved" (Song of Solomon 4:16; Song of Solomon 7:13). May we be enabled by grace to say these blessed words to our beloved Savior and loving Father who are looking for fruit, more fruit and much fruit from our lives. May we give more thought to this vital essential of the Christian life; fruit-bearing, and know more of abiding in Christ as the only way in which fruit can be produced in our lives to the Father's glory.

01.07. Chapter VII - SERVING THE LORD

Chapter VII - SERVING THE LORD When the Lord called Simon and Andrew, He said, "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men" (Mark 1:17). We thus see that the Lord had called them to become workers for Himself and to fish for the souls of men. Serving the Lord, being His fishermen, was to be their business now.

Just before the Lord went to the cross, He told His disciples, "The Son of man is as a man taking a far journey who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch" (Mark 13:34). By this the Lord meant that He was going back to heaven and was leaving His interests here in the hands of His own, whom He expects will be His servants and that each one will do his own particular work for his Master while he watches for His return.

After Christ arose from the dead He told the disciples: "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21), and "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). He was here in the world as the busy servant of God, going about from early morning till night ministering to needy man. The Father had sent him "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). And as the Father had sent Him into the world, so He would now send His own into the world to serve Him and needy mankind. From these Scriptures we may rightly gather that serving the Lord is a vital essential of the Christian life and one which every believer is called to in some measure or another. To live for the Lord and to serve Him should be the main business and vocation of the Christian. We are not saved merely to be safe for heaven and at peace down here. The Lord has saved us and left us here in this world to work and to occupy for Himself and to be His witnesses, lights and representatives in this scene where He was cast out and crucified. Our Savior would have us to be His very hands and feet and heart and lips in this world. He wishes us to carry His messages and run errands for Himself, to go about doing good as He did when here below. He would have His love flow forth to poor suffering mankind through our hearts and He would speak to men and women and children by our lives and lips. What a privilege this is! Archangels are not entrusted with such service as is given to us in wondrous grace. May we prize such a privilege and opportunity and be found serving the Lord who has bought us with His own precious blood. May we realize that thus we are not our own but are called to glorify God in our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:20). Of the new converts at Thessalonica it is written that they turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God: and to wait for his Son from heaven" (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). One of the three great things that characterized them was "labor of love" for the Lord and serving the living and true God to whom they had turned from their idols. May this also characterize us who today have "turned to God from idols." May it in particular be true of every reader of these lines.

What Shall I do?

Sometimes believers ask the question, "What can I do for the Lord?" and add that they have not much ability, or time, or money to serve the Lord with. In seeking to be of some help on this point,

we would first say that it is good to be thus exercised and inquiring of the Lord as to what service one can do for Him. When Saul of Tarsus was arrested by Christ on the Damascus road and brought face to face with Jesus whom he was persecuting, he at once said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). This is a good question and one which every believer should ask the Lord for himself. The Lord answered Saul's question directly with explicit directions that led to his being brought in to full deliverance and salvation in Christ and into the knowledge of his particular service for His new found Lord. We then read that "straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20). At once he was busy for His Lord and testifying for Him. As to what one can do for the Lord, it is helpful to read Colossians 3:23-24, which was probably written to those who were menial servants, perhaps slaves: "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord... for ye serve the Lord Christ." Thus we learn that we can do our everyday, commonplace work as unto the Lord and serve Him in it. So whatever is given us to do, we are to do it heartily as to the Lord and glorify Him in it. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10), is another helpful and encouraging word for our guidance in the matter of service for the Lord. Of Mary the Lord said, "She hath done what she could" (Mark 14:8). This is all that He expects of each of us. If we have a heart that is willing to serve the Lord and desirous of doing whatever He directs us to do, be it ever so small and commonplace, we will soon find that which we can do in service for Him and precious souls. When Moses made excuses for not doing what the Lord told him to do, God said to him, "What is that in thine hand?" (Exodus 4:2). It was a rod he had in his hand and God used it in mighty power. So the Lord would use what we have, however little it may be, but we must surrender it to Him and He will bless it and give us more as we use it for Himself.

There are a multitude of diversified things which can be done in service for the Lord everywhere. There is something for every believer to do as unto his Lord, something for which he or she is especially fitted as a distinct member of the Body of Christ. Be in communion with Him and He will show you what your work is and what you can do, and He will strengthen you for it and use you in blessing to precious souls and for His glory.

" 'Father, where shall I work today?' And my love flowed warm and free, Then He pointed me out a tiny spot, And said, 'Tend that for me.'

I answered quickly, 'Oh, no, not that.

Why no one would ever see, No matter how well my work was done. Not that little place for me.' And the word He spoke, it was not stern, He answered me tenderly, 'Ah, little one, search that heart of thine.

Art thou working for them or me?' The important thing in service for the Lord is not what we are doing, but that we are doing that which He gives us to do for Himself, and that we do it for His eye and not for the eye of man or for self-praise.

Rewards For our encouragement in the trials and sorrows connected with service for the Lord, He graciously promises to reward us for all that we do for Him. He promises to reward even a cup of cold water given in His name (Mark 9:41), and various crowns will be given to those who serve Him here (see 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 2 Timothy 4:7-8; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 2:10). One of the last promises of the Lord is, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man

according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:12). He also will associate the faithful servant with Himself in His kingdom reign. This we learn from Matthew 25:21 : "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Precious encouragement indeed! May we be thereby spurred on to more faithful and diligent service for our worthy Lord and Savior in the little while that remains before His coming and thus manifest in our lives this vital essential of the Christian life.

01.08. Chapter VIII - LOOKING FOR THAT BLESSED HOPE

Chapter VIII - LOOKING FOR THAT BLESSED HOPE The blessed hope of the Christian is expressed in many passages in the New Testament. In Titus 2:13 we are told to be "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us" The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the believer's hope according to 1 Timothy 1:1. Just before the Lord went to the Cross He told the disciples; "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2-3). His coming again to receive His own, the true Church, which is His bride, unto Himself and bring them into the Father's house on high, is the blessed hope the Christian is to look for. This "Looking for that blessed hope" is indeed an essential of the Christian life and that which should characterize every true believer. The Christians at Thessalonica were characterized by three wonderful things which the apostle Paul enumerates in his epistle to them. He wrote: "Remembering without ceasing your (1) work of faith, and (2) labor of love, and (3) patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ". He further spoke of "how ye turned to God from idols," which was their work of faith, and "to serve the living and true God," their labor of love, "And to wait for his Son from heaven," their patience of hope (1 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). Here we have the wonderful triplet of faith, love and hope, which are linked together in 1 Corinthians 13:13 and in other Scriptures.

It is this third feature of hope which we desire to be occupied with in this chapter, so we should notice that the hope of the Thessalonian Christians was expressed in their practical waiting for the coming again of Jesus the Son of God from heaven. This subject of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is the prominent theme of the two epistles of Paul to the Thessalonian Assembly. It is spoken of in every chapter of both epistles and shows what a large place this blessed hope and truth had in the apostle's heart, and the place it should also have in every Christian's affections.

Coming for and with His Saints A careful study of the various passages which speak of the second coming of Christ will reveal that His coming will be in two parts. First, He shall come for His bride, the true Church of His blood-washed believers, and bring them into His Father's house. Then later He will come with all his saints to earth and reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. The Scripture previously quoted from John 14:1-31 definitely speaks of Christ's coming for the purpose of receiving His own unto Himself that they may be with Him in the prepared place of the Father's house.

1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 also clearly sets forth the coming of the Lord for His saints as an event separate from His coming with His own to earth to reign. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Here we read of only the dead in Christ being raised and of those that believe in Jesus' death and resurrection being caught up together with the resurrected believers to meet the Lord in the air and being forever with

Him. This passage presents the Lord coming for His saints, Old and New Testament believers, and as the Bridegroom coming for His bride. Matthew 25:1-10 also presents this aspect of His coming for the wise virgins who are ready and go out to meet Him. The appearing of the Lord, or His manifestation as Son of man with power and great glory, and His coming to earth in judgment with His saints is definitely set forth in the following Scriptures: Matthew 24:30; Matthew 25:31-46; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; 1 Timothy 6:14-15; Revelation 1:7; Revelation 19:11-21 and other passages. To mix these Scriptures with those texts we have given above as referring to the Lord's coming for His saints, and to designate them all as applying to one and the same event, creates great confusion and is a careless reading of things that differ. The Lord once said to a certain lawyer, "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" (Luke 10:26). The Bible does not teach a single, indivisible return of Christ at the end of the tribulation period, as some are teaching and contending for today. We are persuaded that the Scriptures do teach Christ's coming for His Church before the tribulation period that begins in Revelation 6:1-17, the secret rapture of the saints first, and then His coming to earth in power and great glory with His saints at the end of the great tribulation as seen in Revelation nineteen.

Bridal Affections

We have stated that the Lord will come for His bride, the true Church. Let us enlarge upon this relationship of bride and bridegroom somewhat and see how it emphasizes our subject of "Looking for that blessed hope" of the Lord's coming as being an essential of the Christian life. First, we may state that Ephesians 5:23-32 clearly presents to us Christ and His Church in this blessed and most intimate relationship of bride and bridegroom. In Revelation 19:7-9 we read of the marriage of the Lamb in heaven and in Revelation 21:1-27 we have a description of the bride as the Lamb's wife, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Thus the highest and most intimate of earthly relationships is used to shadow forth the link and affinity that exists between the heart of Christ and the Christian. This the Song of Solomon so vividly sets forth in type. The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians that he had espoused, or engaged, them to one husband, that he might present them as a chaste virgin to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2). Thus every true Christian is as one engaged to Christ and there should be bridal affections and longings for Him, just as every engaged young lady's heart goes out in affectionate desires for her lover. Her heart is not satisfied with the wonderful communications and gifts of his love, or with his little visits, but longingly looks forward to the union or marriage day when she shall have him and be with him and his for all of life. If this is true in the earthly sphere of love, how much more should not it be true of us who have accepted the heavenly and divine love of the greatest Lover of all, the Lord Jesus Christ. The divine nature within the believer affectionately desires the Lord Himself, and longs for His promised coming to receive us unto Himself that we may be for ever with Him in the glory. The Spirit of God that indwells us ever seeks to develop these bridal affections and longings for our Lover. "The Spirit and bride say, Come" and the response to the Lord's promise of "Surely I will come quickly," should be "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:17; Revelation 22:20).

Waiting and Watching In Luke 12:35-37 we have the words of the Lord Himself as to the attitude of heart He desires us to have in relation to His coming. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are

those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching." He would have us with loins girded about in preparation for service unto Himself, our lights burning brightly in testimony for Him, and our hearts truly waiting and watching for His return in sincere and affectionate expectation of His coming for us. It will cheer His heart to find His loved ones thus looking and longing for Himself and His coming again. While we wait and long for our Bridegroom to come, we are to be working and witnessing for Him. The two things go together. "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing" (Luke 12:43). May we be characterized by this vital essential of the Christian life, of "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ," and also manifest all the other essentials of the Christian faith which have been before us in these studies.

R K Campbell

02.00.1. Essentials Of The Christian Life

The Church Of The Living God By R K Campbell © biblecentre

02.00.2. Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Introduction

The Church - What is it?

Its Gifts and Ministry

Its Local Aspect

Ground of Gathering

Assembly Meetings

Assembly Discipline

Assembly Relationships

The Day of Ruin

02.00.3. Introduction

Introduction The title which we have chosen for these studies is found in 1 Timothy 3:15. There the apostle Paul gives the reason for writing this first Epistle to Timothy" that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

What a wonderful expression this is - "the church of the living God," God's house, the pillar and ground of the truth. The living God has a church which is His house and dwelling place on earth. We desire to consider this Church and to find out what God's mind is concerning it. In our world of today there is much confusion and little understanding of what the Church really is. We hear the names of many different kinds of churches and denominations and the earnest believer inquires as to which is the right one to belong to or to be affiliated with. The Word of God is the only right place to which one may go to find the answer. Therein we read throughout of one Church in blessed unity in all lands. But we find no denominational names of men attached to it such as we hear of in our day. This Church is the Church of the living God and the only church which God owns and recognizes and to which every true believer in Christ is already joined by God's Spirit, as our subsequent studies will show. To the Scriptures, then, we shall go to find out what God has to say about His Church - "The Church of the Living God."

R. K. Campbell

02.01. Chapter 1: The Church - What is it?

Chapter 1 The Church

What is it?

02.02. What Is It?

What Is It?

We might say at the very beginning that the word translated "church" in our Bible is "ecclesia" in the original Greek Scriptures and means "an assembly of called out ones." It is more properly translated "Assembly" as more correct versions render it. Neither this word nor its Hebrew equivalent are found in the Old Testament, which shows us at once that the Church or Assembly did not exist then. No Church Before Pentecost In the Old Testament God had a nation of people, Israel, in covenant relationship with Himself, but this is not the Church which has a far more intimate and blessed relationship to Christ than Israel had. The nation of Israel is only once spoken of as "the assembly in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38, New Trans.). There they were, in a sense, a called out assembly from Egypt, but in great contrast with the New Testament Assembly and true Church. In the Old Testament there are types and shadows of the Church, such as the brides of Joseph and Moses and the tabernacle in which God dwelt, but the Assembly of God itself did not exist at that time.

However, in the counsels of God the Church was ever in God's mind and purposes from before the creation of the world. It was "the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God" (Ephesians 3:9). It was "kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest" (Romans 16:25-26). The word "Church" or "ecclesia" is first found in Matthew 16:18 and was spoken of by the Lord when He said to Peter, "thou art Peter (Petros-Greek, "a little rock"), and upon this rock (petra-Greek, meaning Himself) I will build My church."

Here the Church is still future and not yet built, for the Lord said, "I will build," not "have built," or "am building." The Greek text indicates future action as all scholars and translations agree, in spite of some who would teach otherwise. The next reference to the Church is in Matthew 18:17 where instruction is given regarding personal trespasses and discipline. This also is evidently future; otherwise, surely whilst the Lord was with His disciples, the case of an offending brother would have been laid before Himself.

There are no other Scriptures whatever which speak of the Church until we come to the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-47. which is the Church's birthday. While the Lord was on earth He was not forming a Church, but presented Himself to Israel as their true King and Messiah and gathered a remnant of true believers and disciples around Himself, while the leaders of Israel rejected Him more and more.

These faithful believers of the Lord's time existed as individual followers of Christ and became the nucleus of the Church at its formation on the day of Pentecost. On that day they were baptized by the descended Spirit into the body of Christ and were thereby joined to their glorified Savior on high (1 Corinthians 12:13). Then they no longer existed as individual believers, but as a corporate body, the Body of Christ, and members one of another, linked together by the Spirit of God which now indwelt them. This was the beginning of the Church of the living God. This is what the Church

is-a body of true believers in Christ, baptized by the Spirit of God into the body of Christ and joined to the Lord and to one another by that same Spirit. This we shall consider in detail a little later. From what has been before us, it should be clear that the teaching of some that the Church began with John the Baptist is quite erroneous and unscriptural.

It should likewise be apparent that the common practice of calling buildings used for religious services "churches" or "the church" is also unscriptural and misleading. The Church is not a material building, but a body of living believers, living stones forming a holy temple in the Lord (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5). This truth we will consider more fully later. The believers meeting together in any certain place constitute a true Church, the building where they meet being but the meeting place, whether a home, hall, chapel, or formally designated church building.

We have so far been largely considering what the true Church is not. We may now proceed to look more directly at the positive side, at what Scripture presents the Church to be.

Called Out Ones

Returning to the meaning of the word "ecclesia," we may observe that the Church of the living God is, therefore, a company of called out ones called out of the world-those whom God has called unto Himself by the Gospel of His grace and who have accepted that Gospel and the Savior it presents. They are thus separated from the world and are spoken of as "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Corinthians 1:2), which means "set apart" in Christ. In harmony with this we have the words of James in Acts 15:14 : "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." This is what the Church is-a people taken out of the nations for His name by the sovereign operations of the Holy Spirit. Had the Church only remembered this it would not have settled down in the world and become worldly minded, but would have remained separated from the world and would have been heavenly in character, as those truly called out to the rejected Christ in glory.

If we look at Acts 2:1-47 we find the believers there a truly separated company. The 120 are gathered together in the upper room, away from the world that crucified their Savior, and continuing with one accord in prayer.. Then the Spirit descended from heaven and filled them all and they began to tell out in other tongues the wonderful works of God. Peter now preached Christ to the multitude urging them to repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and save themselves from this perverse generation by thus taking their stand for Christ and separating from the nation that rejected Him.

They that received his word were baptized and about three thousand souls were added to this separated company. Such was the beginning of the Church of God, the called out Assembly.

Ultra-Dispensational Error As there are those today who would tell us that the true Church did not begin at Pentecost in Acts 2:1-47, but at the end of Acts and Paul's imprisonment, we must say a few words about this teaching. Acts 2:47 says, "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." These words certainly tell us that the Church had now begun and that it was being built as the Lord added saved souls to it day by day. But this was not "the church, Which is his body," which Ephesians 1:22-23 afterward speaks of, say these Ultra-dispensationalists. To this we reply that the Lord has but one Church and that the Church of Acts 2:1-47 is as truly the body of Christ as that spoken of later in Ephesians. There is not a Jewish Church and then a Church of Gentiles,

or of Jews and Gentiles. The Church began at Pentecost with Jewish believers and later Gentiles were added to it (Acts 10:1-48), both being reconciled unto God in one body by the cross and the twain made one new man (Ephesians 2:14-16). True, this was not all revealed at once and the distinctive truths of the Church were only brought out later by Paul, the special apostle to the Church, in his prison Epistles, but the Church of the living God began at Pentecost just the same. The book of Acts is a transition period from Judaism into the liberty and fulness of Christianity. These Jewish believers could not be taken all at once from Judaism into the full teaching of the Church, so these great and wonderful truths of the Church were gradually revealed and fully brought out at the proper time during Paul's imprisonment.

Joined by the Lord

Returning to Acts 2:47, it is well to notice that "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Men did not join themselves to it, as people join churches today; the joining was done by the Lord Himself. Those whom He saved He joined to the Church by His Spirit and "of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord" (Acts 5:13-14).

Such was the power and holiness of the early Church that the unsaved would not dare to try to join themselves to it; they felt that they had not what these born-again believers had. But when any were saved, they were added to the Lord, not to men or organizations, and found themselves naturally one with the believers and already joined to the Church of God. The same principles should be true today, for it is as true now as then, that the Lord adds to the Church daily such as are being saved. If one is not saved, he cannot join himself to God's true Church. He may join a church on earth, but no one belongs to the true Church unless he is born again. It ought to be as true today as then, that no one who is unsaved would dare to join himself to the local Church of believers, but alas, the Church has lost its power and it is no longer thus.

How comforting it should be to every believer in Christ in this day of confusion, disorder, and apostasy in the professing church on earth to know that since his conversion he is joined by the Lord to God's true Church to which only genuine, saved believers belong! He is part of the "church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven" (Hebrews 12:23), and should rejoice because his name is written in heaven in the book of life from which it will never be blotted out (Luke 10:20; Revelation 3:5). This is the only church that one can Scripturally belong to. For we do not find believers in the Bible belonging to any church but the Church of Jesus Christ. Neither do we read of any church membership rolls, but simply of the believers being joined to the Lord and added to the Church by the Lord. The only membership known in Scripture is membership in Christ's Body.

We will make a few practical applications of these truths to our day. If one is joined by the Lord to His true Church, why should he join another church since he is already joined to the only Church which God recognizes?

Believers are to have fellowship one with another and to worship and serve the Lord together. They are to edify one another and to pray with each other as those already joined together in the Lord, as "members one of another" (Romans 12:5), but Scripture never tells us to form a church organization or to join one of man's devising. We are exhorted in Ephesians 4:3 to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, "a unity of believers already made by the Spirit, not a unity of

views or doctrines which we are to make. This God-made unity of true believers we are to recognize and act upon and to recognize and act upon no other. These are a few of the practical principles which flow from being joined by the Lord to the Church of the living God. The Church is presented in Scripture under the three figures of a body, a bride, and a building. We have already briefly referred to two of these figures, but shall now consider them a little more in detail. First, we shall consider the Church as a body.

02.03. A. The Body of Christ

A. The Body of Christ This is spoken of in several Epistles, but we shall turn first to its mention in Ephesians 1:22-23. After speaking of the resurrection of Christ from the dead and His glorification and exaltation in heaven "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named," the apostle says that God "hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." The death, resurrection, and glorification of Christ in heaven is the foundation of the Church. There could not be such a thing as the Body of Christ till Christ was in heaven as man and as the head of the body with the work of redemption for sinful man accomplished. Before there can be a body there must be a head, so we have Christ Jesus exalted in heaven as head over all things first, then His Body was formed on earth by the Holy Spirit sent down from that glorified Head. The Church, then, is His Body on earth, His complement, which fills up or completes the mystic, glorified Man, just as Eve was necessary to the completeness of God's thoughts as to the first Adam. As members of the Body of Christ, believers are united to Him, their blessed Head, at the right hand of God and should be heavenly as the head of the Church is heavenly. This is a very important truth, but only practical realization of union with the ascended Christ will produce this heavenly character.

Writing to the Corinthians the apostle told them by inspiration: "as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also (is) the Christ. For also in (the power of) one Spirit we have all been baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondmen or free, and have all been given to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:12-13 New Trans.). In this portion and the verses that follow the figure of the human body with its many members is used as an illustration of the Church, which, with its many individual members is one body, the Body of Christ. Though there are very many diverse parts in the human body, there is a marvelous unity throughout and the numerous members are all one body."So also is the Christ," says the apostle. Notice the words, "the Christ" which means Christ and His body, the Church. The human body, then, with its unity and yet diversity of members is a picture of Christ and His Church, the spiritual body.

Only One Body The Church of Christ is but one body, though its members are multitude, each one differing from the other, and scattered over the whole earth. "We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another," wrote Paul to the Romans (Romans 12:5). So also he wrote to the Corinthians, "We being many are one bread, and one body" (1 Corinthians 10:17), and to the Ephesians he said, "There is one body" (Ephesians 4:4). This is the truth of God regarding His people who belong to the Church of Jesus Christ. By the one spirit they have all been baptized into one body at conversion, no matter what their nationality or race, and now they are "one body in Christ." This was a fact in the apostle's day and it is still the divine truth today. God's Word does not say, "There was one body," or "There shall be one body," but "There is one body." In spite of the many differing religious bodies in Christendom, God still sees His true children on earth as "one body in Christ," no matter what various bodies of earthly church

organizations they may belong to or how scattered and divided they may be. This latter is to their shame, for the numerous opposing religious systems and bodies are not according to His mind or will and have no recognition before Him. What God recognizes and owns on earth is the Body of Christ and that alone is dear to Him. The many religious systems of men, with their multitudes of unregenerate, spiritually dead members, have not originated from God, but are of man's devising and are not owned of Him. But God does own and recognize with pleasure every child of God with spiritual life within these various systems and sees them as belonging to the Body of Christ which His Spirit has formed.

Visible Unity In the days of the apostles the believers in Christ were literally one visible body on earth. God and man both could see them as one body. There were no divisions among them. All the Christians in one locality met together in one place and were in happy unity and fellowship with all the Christians and Christian gatherings elsewhere in that province and in all other countries, as the Acts and Epistles bear witness. It was thus manifest to all that these Christians everywhere were "one body in Christ," a living, working organism functioning under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. This was what God willed and directed and so it should have continued. But alas, this happy visible unity was soon marred and disrupted. Unsaved professors and perverse men crept in unawares (Jude 1:4) and the Church on earth became a great house with vessels to honor and dishonor (2 Timothy 2:19-21) . Later, divisions came in with corruptions and departures from God's Word so that the unity of the Body of Christ was no longer seen, though still existing. The ruin, divisions, and confusion which characterize Christendom today tell how far we have departed from God's mind and will as to there being but one body of believers.

Though this unity of the Body of Christ is not seen in our day, it is there, nevertheless, and will be seen again when the Lord gathers all His people home. And when Christ comes forth to reign on earth, the Church, which is His body, will be displayed with Him in all its wondrous unity.

Another has well said that the unity of the Body of Christ is like a chain stretched across a river. You see it on each side, but it dips in the middle giving the impression that it has given way at the center. So with the Church of Christ. It was seen to be one in the beginning and will be seen to be one by and by. It is one in God's sight now, though the unity is not visible to mortal eyes. (C. H. M.).

Responsibility But though there are so many divisions and different religious bodies in Christendom today we are not thereby excused from our responsibility to give practical testimony to the glorious truth of the one Body of Christ and to visibly confess in action the unity of the Church of Christ. We are not only to hold the theory and truth of there being one body, but we are called upon to give a practical expression to that blessed truth in our Christian fellowship and a practical testimony against everything that denies it. To use the words of another: "The first step in confessing the unity of the Church of God is to step out of the divisions of Christendom.

Let us not stop to ask what is to be our second step. God never gives light for two steps at a time. Is it true that there is but one body? Unquestionably, God says so. Well, then, the divisions, the sects, and the systems of Christendom are plainly opposed to the mind and will and Word of God. Truly so. What are we to do? Step out of them. This, we may rest assured, is the first step in a right direction. It is impossible to yield any practical confession to the unity of the Church of God while we stand connected with that which practically denies it. We may hold the theory in the

region of our understanding, while we deny the reality in our practical career. But if we desire to confess the truth of the one body, our very first business -our primary duty-is to stand in thorough separation from all the sects and schisms of Christendom.

"And what then? Looking to Jesus; and this is to continue right on to the end. Is this ... to form a new sect, or join some new body? By no means; it is but fleeing from the ruins around us to find our resource in the all-sufficiency of the name of Jesus, to keep the eye fixed on Him amid the wild watery waste, until we reach in safety the haven of everlasting rest and glory." (C. H. M.) Its Various Members

We shall now consider the various members of the Body of Christ and their functions as outlined in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31. There we read of various parts of the body, such as the foot, the hand, the ear and the eye, and of their various functions and need of each other. Then in 1 Corinthians 12:28 the apostle says, "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." These are some of the various gifts or specific members of the body which were found in the early Church. In Ephesians 4:11 we read of Christ ascending up on high and giving gifts unto men, "some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." These, undoubtedly, are the permanent gifts found in the Church at a later date those which abide until Christ comes as Ephesians 4:13 indicates.

These special gifts and members of the body, enumerated in the above passages, are the more public and prominent members, so to speak, given "for the edifying of the body of Christ." The nature of these gifts and their functions we will consider later, when we take up the ministry of the Church. But the apostle in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 is careful to stress the importance and need of the less honorable members of the body which are not so prominent and manifest as the above mentioned ones. No member can say to another, "I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary," says the inspired writer. "God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it" (1 Corinthians 12:24-26).

These are very practical considerations which are connected with our being members of the Body of Christ. They concern our daily life and relationships one with another in material things as well as spiritual, and we need to consider daily the practical application of the truth set forth in the above verses.

There is another important Scripture bearing upon the body and its lesser members to which we must also refer. It is Ephesians 4:15-16 : "the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." This verse reminds us that even such a small member as a joint must supply its measure from Christ the head and also that every part must work effectually if the whole body is to function properly and increase. This, we know, is definitely true in the human body and is likewise so in the spiritual Body of Christ.

Place Assigned of God

God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him" (1 Corinthians 12:18). Here we have the sovereignty of God in placing believers in the Body of Christ and giving each member a special place and function as it pleases Him. No one can choose his place or say what he wishes to do in the Body of Christ. Each one is given his place by God and fitted of Him for the performance of his special work as a particular member of the body.

We should remember that if we are given a place in the Body of Christ it means also that we are placed there for a definite purpose and for a specific work. This is the practical side of the truth and the realization of it in our souls will lead to practical manifestation of our being specific members of the Body of Christ. "To every man his work," are the words of the Lord in Mark 13:34 Head Directs Members

It follows, then, that human appointments and human aspirations for certain work and places in the Church of God are entirely wrong. No one has a right to choose to preach or teach, etc., or to appoint someone else to do so. He must be called of the Lord to this and be sure that such is his appointed place in the Body of Christ. If such is his place, he will be gifted and fitted of God for this work, and his gift will be manifest to the Church. He is responsible to the Lord to perform it in dependence upon Christ, the Head, who has called him.

It is for each one to learn from the Lord by personal communion and experience what is his or her place in the Body of Christ and what work is to be performed as such.

It is the head that directs the movements and functions of the human body and likewise it is Christ, the head of His spiritual body, the Church, who must direct the movements and work of its various members. In our bodies the control of the members by the head is through the nervous system which goes from the head to every member and part of the body. In the spiritual body this control and directing of the members by Christ, the head, is through the Holy Spirit who dwells in each member and joins all the members together and to the head in heaven. We might liken the Holy Spirit in this respect, then, to the nervous system of the human body, which is the connecting link between the head and the body. If the Spirit is ungrieved within us, He will exercise the heart as to certain service for the Lord and lead on in it under the direction of the Head of the Church. But this means that we must yield to the Spirit and not quench it.

If the reader will turn to Acts 13:1-5, he will there find an example of the directing of the Head by the Holy Spirit. As certain prophets and teachers in the Church at Antioch ministered to the Lord, "the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." The Church then expressed their fellowship with them by fasting, praying, and laying their hands upon them and sent them away. It is then expressly added, "So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia;" etc. Such was the order then and such is God's way for us at all times. The Body - an organism From what has been before us, it should be apparent that the Church of God is not an organization set up by man, but a living organism, composed of living members, indwelt by the living Spirit, linked to the living Head in heaven and directed and controlled by Him. Is there any difference between the two-an organization and an organism? Certainly there is. The one is a society formed by man, the latter is a living being formed by God. The book of Acts shows us the functioning of this living organism, the Church, in the days of its

beginning. Energized and directed through the Holy Spirit by their Head in heaven, the various members of the body went forth and carried on the work of God without any human head or organization on earth. And all was in harmony and unity, too, unity such as is never obtained by man's organizing and collaborations, for there is a "unity of the Spirit" which we are exhorted to keep. They proved, too, that they had a living Head in glory and that Christ is not a mere figurehead there, but a living reality and all-sufficient. He has always proved sufficient for His Church in every emergency and vicissitude throughout the centuries and will be so to the end, if only depended upon. May we prove Him thus-our all-sufficient, glorified Head in heaven. The Contrast About Us As one looks around in Christendom today, however, practically everything is seen to be in striking contrast to what we see the Church to have been in the Acts and in the Epistles where it was according to the mind of God. Instead of the functioning of a living organism, one sees church organizations everywhere, each having its head, subordinate heads, etc., with authority over others and little or nothing is known or seen of Christ as the head of the Church, directing the members through the Holy Spirit. Christ is but a mere figurehead in heaven to most, it would seem, when it comes to the practical aspect of His being the head of the Church, and the Holy Spirit as a living Person and Power on the earth is little known or counted upon. Christ and the Holy Spirit are practically supplanted by the human machinery of man's systematized denominational organizations. And this is not only among unsaved religious professors, but amongst true believers as well, although perhaps not in the same degree.

Beloved, these things ought not to be. "What saith the Scriptures?" should be our inquiry, and we should have a "Thus saith the Lord" for all that we practice and hold. Everything that does not conform to His Word is contrary to His will and should be given up. May the Lord, the head of the Church, give reader and writer to be exercised about these precious truths connected with the Body of Christ and to practically walk in them in separation from all else which denies them.

02.04. B. The House of God

B. The House of God In the Old Testament God dwelt in the blood-sprinkled holy of holies of the tabernacle among the children of Israel and later on in the temple. But now since the death and resurrection of Christ, God "dwelleth not in temples made with hands," as Paul declared to the Athenians (Acts 17:24). His house and dwelling place on earth now is the Church (1 Timothy 3:15) and this brings us to the consideration of the second figure of the Church -the house of God. In Ephesians 2:19-22 we read: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." From these verses we learn that the believers in Christ are builded together by the Spirit upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ as the chief corner stone, for an habitation or dwelling place of God. Whenever anyone is saved, he is added as a stone to this spiritual building, and fitly framed together it groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord. In this sense the Church is an unfinished building which will be completed when the last soul is saved in this present church or grace period and then the Lord will come for His people.

Peter also tells us in his first Epistle a little about God's house. He says, "Ye also, as lively (living) stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). The believers are here spoken of as living stones built upon Christ, the living Stone, and forming a spiritual house for the purpose of offering up spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God.

We have previously noticed that the Lord said in Matthew 16:18, "upon this rock (Himself) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Accordingly, we see how Christ has been building His house, the Church, from the day of Pentecost on to this present day and that it still stands in spite of all the onslaughts of hell itself against it throughout the centuries of Satan's persecutions and cunning attempts to destroy it. In this living, spiritual building of true believers, God has been dwelling through the Spirit. It has been His house and temple, His habitation since its formation upon the descent of the Spirit from heaven in Acts 2:1-47. Writing to the Corinthian believers, Paul says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16) . Collectively, the believers at Corinth were God's temple and house in that local place, as, is also true of believers today in every place. This is what the house of God is. It is not a church building of material stones, etc., as is often thought and spoken of, but a spiritual building of living stones believers in Christ.

Order and Responsibility

These are the principal thoughts connected with the Church as the house of God. For God is a God of order and if He dwells in a house, it must be according to His mind and in order. There is responsibility to keep that dwelling place pure and holy, for "holiness becometh thine house, O

Lord" (Psalms 93:5). Hence there must be discipline and order in the Church, since it is the dwelling place of the holy God. The reason for Paul's writing his first Epistle to Timothy was that he and we might "know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God" (1 Timothy 3:15). Thus we see that there must be a becoming behavior in the house of God, and that order, holiness, and discipline are connected with our being God's house and household. These subjects we purpose to consider in detail when we take up the local aspect of the Church, the visible Church, as it is sometimes called.

We would just say in passing that it is thus apparent that discipline is connected with the Church as the house of God and not as the body of Christ. The principal thought in connection with the Body of Christ is grace, position, and vital union with Christ, the glorified Head. From this body no human power can cut off a member. neither can a member be added by human power, while in the house of God, one may be cut off from fellowship by an act of discipline, or exclusion. The holiness of God's house necessitates such action being taken if serious evil is allowed in the life of one in fellowship. See 1 Corinthians 5:13.

Two Aspects of the House In the Scriptures which we have been considering (Ephesians 2:1-22 and 1 Peter 2:1-25) we have one aspect of the house of God as the building which Christ is building and into which only true believers enter as living stones. Christ is the builder and it is perfect. In this aspect the house of God and the body of Christ are co-extensive, both comprising only genuine believers in Christ. But in 1 Corinthians 3:1-23 we have another aspect of the house of God, where man is the builder and responsibility and resulting failure is connected therewith. Here we read: "we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon" (1 Corinthians 3:9-10). Then the apostle goes on to speak of building upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble and says that the fire will try every man's work of what sort it is in the judgment day when rewards will be given for work which abides the fire (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

Wood, hay, and stubble, it is apparent, will not stand the test of the fire, therefore they are spurious materials and not true believers which have been brought into God's building by man's work. Thus in this aspect of the house of God on earth, where man is entrusted with the work of building, there is failure and unsaved professors are often mixed with true believers. At first, in the apostle's day, the house built by man was co-extensive with the Body of Christ and the house built by Christ. The Lord added to the Church those who were saved and all who were brought into the house of God on earth were genuine believers. But soon one, Simon Magus, professed to be saved and was baptized and received into the privileges of the house of God, the Christian company. This man later proved to be unconverted and not right with God (Acts 8:1-40).

Here was perhaps the first failure and the first spurious material of wood, hay and stubble which was built into God's building by man. He was not a living stone, and therefore not a member of the Body of Christ. There was now that in the house which was not in the body and they ceased to be co-extensive and one and the same thing; the house became larger than the body. This building of mixed materials into God's house has continued ever since, so that it is now very important to distinguish between these two aspects of God's house that being built by Christ in perfection and

that being built by man in imperfection and failure with mixed materials.

Already, at the close of the apostle Paul's life, the house of God had become a "great house" of vessels to honor and vessels to dishonor, vessels of gold and silver and vessels of wood and earth, so that in order to be "a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use," it was necessary to separate oneself from the vessels to dishonor in the great house (2 Timothy 2:20-21). Such is the house as built by man.

It might be stated in closing our remarks on this subject, that it is the baptism of water, the outward mark of Christian profession, which places one in the house of God which man has a part in building, while the baptism of the Holy Spirit, alone, can bring one into the Body of Christ, as we have previously seen.

02.05. C. The Bride of Christ

C. The Bride of Christ

We come now to the third figure of the Church of God in Scripture. This is found in Ephesians 5:21-32 where Paul shows that the Church is the bride of Christ and that the nature of this blessed and intimate relationship between Christ and His Church is the pattern for the relationship and conduct of husbands and wives. Reading from Ephesians 5:25 we have:

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That lie might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

Affection, Intimacy and Association

Under this figure of the bride we have the Church presented as the object of the closest and tenderest affections of Christ and of His loving care, as a true husband loves and cares for his wife, only here the heavenly is rather the example for the earthly. This figure also sets forth the most intimate relationship which exists between Christ and the Church the closest that is possible, the tender intimacy of a loving husband and wife. And it also presents the thought of closest future association with Christ in His coming dominion and glory, as Eve was associated with Adam in his place of headship over all creation. This we shall later see more fully from other Scriptures. The Church of the living God, then, is the bride of Christ, which He loved with an infinite love and purchased for Himself by His own precious blood, which He gave to redeem her from sin and destruction. This is what He did for her in the past, that He might have her forever with Himself as the object of His deep affections and to share all His glory and dominion in the coming day. In the present His un failing love is ever caring for her, nourishing and cherishing her, sanctifying and cleansing her with the washing of water by the Word-the application of the cleansing power of the Word of God by the Spirit, that she might be morally fitted for this intimate place of association with Him in all His glory and dominion. In the future, His love for the Church will be manifested in His presenting her, the bride, to Himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, and she shall be forever with Him, her beloved Bridegroom. As another has said: "He is the One who can present it to Himself as being the author of its existence, of its beauty, and of the perfection in which it must appear in heaven to be worthy of such a Bridegroom and of the glory that is there."

Such is the blessed portion of the Church as the bride of Christ, and the love which every member of that bride should be enjoying now, for the same love that we shall enjoy in that unsullied and eternal brightness is the love wherewith He loves us now in this world's night of darkness .Oh, let

our hearts rest in His precious love! Our Affections and Being Faithful As we, His bride, enjoy His love, our heart's affections should, and will, go out to Him in longing desire for Himself, our Bridegroom, and in devoted faithfulness to Him in the scene of His rejection during His absence. We are to remember the words of Paul to the Corinthians and realize that they apply to every believer. "I have espoused (betrothed, engaged) you unto one man, to present (you) a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2, New Trans.). As Christians we are engaged to Jesus Christ and are to be faithful and true to Him, keeping ourselves as a chaste virgin for Himself, unspotted from the world that crucified Him, and not giving our love and affections to the world system of the enemy of our Beloved One, but bestowing all our love and friendship upon Him, rendering faithful service to Him, and living for Himself in joyful expectation of His coming for us and that day of nuptial union. This is a responsibility which flows from this most intimate relationship with Christ.

Subjection

Furthermore, our text in Ephesians 5:1-33 reminds us that this blessed relationship carries with it the thoughts of headship and subjection, as seen in the marriage union. "Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing" (Ephesians 5:23-24). We have already spoken of Christ being the head of the Church so shall only touch on the subjection of the Church as the bride of the Lord, her head. This subjection to Christ is another most important responsibility resulting from this blessed privilege of being the bride of Christ. It means that we are to obey His word down here and not do our own will or follow our own wishes, but are to follow the instructions He has given us in the Bible. We are not to do as we think expedient or best, with regard to ourselves personally or to the Church collectively, but are to search the Scriptures for the mind of Christ and to act upon them in subjection to Him as our head. Hence it follows that the Church is never to teach or set up rules, doctrines, etc. Its place is to be subject to all the rules, principles, teachings, and doctrines which Christ has set forth in His Word. The Lord teaches and preaches by the gifts He has given to the Church, under the Spirit's direction and power presenting His Word. The Church's place is to be subject unto Christ's Word and not to take the place of teaching and ruling, as the Church of Rome and others are doing. Had the Church not forgotten this and lost sight of her high calling as the bride of Christ, how different things would be today. There would not be all the conflicting denominations and groups with their different forms of procedure, varying doctrines, etc. For if all would be in subjection to Christ, oneness of mind (His mind) and His path for His Church would be found in His Word. The Spirit would teach all of us the same thing and each believer thus subject would be found walking obediently in that one path of His will. Then all would be together in the blessed unity of the Spirit as the subject bride of Christ.

How blessed this would be and what a testimony the Church would then be in the world for Christ. So it was in the beginning of the Church's history and so it would be now if all would be subject to Christ as head and really know Him as their Bridegroom. The reason, then, for all the divisions and confusion among God's people today is that the Church has not been and is not completely subject to Christ. Man's will has been at work, hence the ruin about us. But though the Church has collectively failed in subjection, it still becomes each individual believer to be in subjection to Christ's will and Word. In the Lord's messages to the seven churches of Asia which speak prophetically of the Church's history and departure from His Word, the word at the close to each one is: "He (the individual) that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches"

(Revelation 2:7; Revelation 2:11; Revelation 2:17; Revelation 2:29). May each reader hear and obey and walk in separation from all that is not according to His Word and in subjection to Him. Her Hope and Destiny

Having considered the place of affection, intimacy, association, and responsibility to be faithful and subject to Christ, which the true Church of born-again believers has as His bride, we may now dwell a little on her hope and destiny. From the very nature of the relationship of bride and bridegroom, it should be readily seen that the Church's hope and culmination of desire is her marriage union with Him and being forever with Himself at His side. Being united to Christ and sharing all His glory is the Church's only proper hope and destiny. This is intimated in Ephesians 5:1-33 in the verses we considered previously, where it is said that Christ will present the Church to Himself, a glorious church without spot or wrinkle. This will be fulfilled at the marriage day and this nuptial union day should be the Church's expectation and longing desire as the bride of Jesus. Then she shall see Him as He is and be like Him, spotless and pure (1 John 3:2-3). Nothing else can satisfy true bridal affections which should be found in the Church. This blessed hope of the Church was given her by Jesus Himself in those well-known and well-loved words of John 14:2-3. Here He tells the believers that He would go to prepare a place for them in His Father's house and that He would come again and receive them unto Himself, that where He was they might be also. This the Bridegroom has promised His bride and has declared that His heart's desire is that where He is, she may also be.

Christ's longing desire for His bride is also touchingly expressed in His high-priestly prayer to the Father as recorded in John 17:24. There He prays: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." This is the Lord's purpose and goal, shall we say, for His Church—that she be with Him in the glory. And such should ever be the longing desire and hope of His bride. The Church is heavenly in origin—born from above and united to Christ, her head, in glory. She should be heavenly in character down here, for her "life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3), and her destiny is that of being married to Christ in heaven and forever sharing His glory. All the promises to the Church are heavenly, whilst all the promises to Israel are earthly, so these two peoples should never be confused.

Having thus seen from Scripture that the only proper hope and destiny of the Church as Christ's bride is that of union and association with Him in heavenly glory and of being like Him, conformed to His image, it should be apparent that the thought often expressed, that the Church's goal and ultimate hope is to improve and convert the world to Christ, is quite a mistaken expectation and unscriptural hope. The Church's mission is certainly to represent and manifest Christ in this world and to proclaim the Gospel to the lost, but the hope of improving and converting the whole world to Christ is never given to her in Scripture. On the contrary, His Word definitely shows that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse" (2 Timothy 3:13), and that God will need to intervene in judgment to end all man's wickedness. The Church's hope and destiny, then is her being raptured to heaven with Him, as 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 outlines, and not the improvement or conversion of the world.

Let us now turn to a few Scriptures in the book of Revelation, which give us more of the future destiny of the Church in her union and association with Christ.

Undoubtedly her being caught up to heaven takes place in Revelation 4:1, as to point of time, and she is part of the worshipping, redeemed company in chapters four and five, as represented by the twenty-four elders. During all the time that the judgments of God will be poured out on apostate Christendom and this wicked world, as prophesied in chapters six to nineteen, the Church of true believers is safe in the glory with her beloved Savior.

Then in Revelation 19:1-21 we hear of the marriage of the Lamb. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousnesses (marginal reading) of saints" (Revelation 19:7-8). The false bride of the apostate Church having been judged in chapter seventeen, and the true bride having made herself ready, this glorious event of the marriage of Christ and His blood-bought Church can take place. Then He comes to earth with His bride in judgment upon the living nations and reigns with her over the whole earth (ch. 19: 11-20:6). In Revelation 21:9-27 the bride, the Lamb's wife, is described minutely in all her glory as "a great and high mountain," "that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God," etc. (The reader will please read all the verses). Then she will be the heavenly metropolis of the earthly kingdom of Jesus Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Revelation 21:1-8 describes the eternal scene and state after the 1000 years of the kingdom reign of Christ are expired and the first heaven and the first earth have passed away. Then there will be a new heaven and a new earth. Here we read: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people," etc. This is the eternal destiny of the Church, Christ's bride. She is the same holy city. of the millennium, a bride adorned for her husband and now the tabernacle or eternal dwelling place of God. What a glorious destiny is that of the "Church of the living God!" May it enrapture our hearts more and lead us out in increasingly devoted affection for our precious Bridegroom, who has secured all this blessedness for us by laying down His life for us on Calvary.

Summary In concluding our first chapter on What Is the Church of the Living God, let us restate some of the leading thoughts which have been before us in answer to our chapter's question. We have seen from God's Word that the Church did not begin until Pentecost and that it is composed of born-again believers who have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ and joined by Him to His Church, of which He is the head in heaven. They are a company of called out ones, separated from the world, and ever seen by God as one body throughout the world in spite of all the divisions that exist among them.

She is pictured to us in a three-fold way, as the Body of Christ, the house of God, and the bride of Christ. As the body, there are the various members with the responsibility to function for Him in their assigned and fitted places under the direction of Christ the head. As the house of God, the Church is His dwelling place on earth and responsible to maintain God's order and holiness therein. As the bride of Christ, affection, intimacy, faithfulness, subjection, and eternal companionship and association with Jesus in all His glory is the portion, hope, and destiny of the Church. With this survey of the general scope of the Church at large before us, we will more

readily understand the Scriptural order and nature of the local Church, which we shall consider in Chapter Three. by R. K. Campbell

Chapter 18

02.06. Chapter 2: ITS GIFTS AND MINISTRY

Chapter 2 ITS GIFTS AND MINISTRY

02.07. Introduction

Introduction

We have previously seen that Christ is the head of the Church and the only head allowed in Scripture and that He directs the various members of His body, which is the Church. Now as we come to consider the particular ministry of the Church, that of teaching, preaching, and caring for souls, we find that this work was in the beginning and is now to be carried on especially by gifts which He, the ascended and glorified Head, has given to His Church. From Ephesians 4:7-8; Ephesians 4:11-13 we learn, that "unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. . . And he gave some, apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

02.08. Source, Channels, and Extent of Ministry

Source, Channels, and Extent of Ministry The basis on which the giving of these gifts of ministry by Christ depends is that of the redemption He has accomplished by His blood and of His ascension to heaven. As the victorious risen and ascended Savior, who has led the whole power of the enemy captive, conquered Satan who had held man captive, and who loves His Church and cares for each member of it, He gives gifts unto men for the performance of Christian ministry, that souls might be saved and His people be built up, established, nourished, and perfected—thus attaining unto the stature of a full man in Christ. Christian ministry, then, flows from Christ exalted at the right hand of God as the head and source of all. Hence, there can be no true ministry in the Church, or by it, apart from the recognition and dependence upon Christ as the head and origin of all ministrations.

It should be observed that there is quite a difference between ministry, Christian priesthood, and worship. All Christians, men, women, and children, are priests with access to the presence of God and able to present worship praise and thanksgiving, to God. Priesthood is universal and from man to God, while ministry in the Word is an action through man, from God toward men. It is a varied service by particular members of the body through whom Christ thus acts for the good of all. It is only a few among the many who are what Scripture calls ministers of the Word or public servants of Christ. We speak not now of the general sense in which all ought to be serving Christ every day of their lives; but the question now is of the proper ministry in the Word" for it is plain that all Christians have not the power to preach the Word of God profitably for the souls of others.

According to Scripture, the spiritual ministry of the Church is to be performed by the gifts which Christ has given to the Church—those gifted and enabled by Him for such work—and not by men who have merely chosen the ministry as a profession or who claim the right to minister because they have been trained by man in colleges and seminaries for it and have also been ordained by man to the so-called ministry of their particular denominational church. All this, which is so common today and is looked upon as the proper way for the providing of ministry in the churches, is absolutely foreign to Scripture and opposed to God's will and way for His Church and its ministry as revealed in His Word. When one searches the Scriptures, considers the apostolic Church, and makes a comparison between this and the organized system of ministry in the present church world, he is forced to conclude that it is wholly without Scriptural foundation and of human invention. We shall consider this more fully later.

Furthermore, it should be noted that our text in Ephesians 4:1-32 says that the gifts of ministry which Christ gave are for the perfection of the saints and for the edifying of the Body of Christ. If the Lord has given one a gift to teach, preach, or shepherd His sheep, he is a gift to the whole Church and his service should ever be toward the saints of God, the Body of Christ, and not to just a certain denominational group. We have previously seen that in the Bible God only speaks of one body, His Church of born-again believers, and this is the Church to which He has given gifts and which every true minister of Christ should serve and seek to build up. Thus the gifts and true

ministers whom Christ gives are for the benefit of the whole Church of God in a locality, country, or even in the entire world. "Feed the flock of God which is among you," says Peter in 1 Peter 5:2. It is God's flock, not man's. It embraces all His people around us.

Christ not only gave gifts unto men when He ascended up on high, but He continues there in the heavens and abides as the Head of the Church and as the giver of all needful gifts for the continuation of His Church in this world. He is still giving gifts unto men, raising up and calling this one and that one, causing them to be divinely taught for their own soul's need and giving them a power, not possessed before, to act effectively upon the souls of others in awakening, clearing, or establishing souls in the grace of God, or to communicate truth convincingly to believers. And this will continue "till we all come in the unity of the faith," as our text assures us. So that we are warranted in expecting a perpetuation of ministry of the same character and flowing from the same source as that in the apostolic Church. Whatever is necessary for the gathering in of souls, and caring for them when gathered, abides till Christ comes when all will be completed. In defining more fully what a gift is, we would add that it is spiritual power from above to act upon souls. It is more than natural ability to speak or teach, though Christ does give talents "to every man according to his several ability" (Matthew 25:15), so that natural ability is taken into account by the Lord in His sovereign distribution of ministerial gifts and talents, but natural gift alone does not make one a minister of God's Word. There must be the positive bestowal of a gift from Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 the various gifts are spoken of as manifestations of the Spirit. The different gifts are looked at there as functioning by the Holy Spirit; "all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will" (1 Corinthians 12:11). The Lord is, however, the real and proper giver; the Spirit of God is rather the intermediate means of conveying the gift, distributing or making it good,-the energy by which the Lord acts.

Apostles and Prophets

These are the first of the gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:11, which the ascended Christ gave to His Church. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets." They are what might be called the foundation gifts, which God used for the purpose of laying a broad and deep platform, on which the Church was to be built. This work was done by those whom God empowered in a special manner.

Ephesians 2:20 speaks of the Church being "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." Of course, Christ is, in the greatest and highest sense, the foundation "Upon this rock I will build my church." But still, to use the words of another, "As the means not only of revealing the mind of God touching the Church, but also particularly of laying down with authority the landmarks of His husbandry in the earth-the Church of God, the apostles and prophets were thus used. To distinguish them the former were characterized by an authority in action, the prophets by giving out according to God His mind and will about this great mystery" (W. K.). The apostles occupied a unique position in the establishment of the Church which could not be transmitted to others. They were special witnesses of our Lord's resurrection. See Acts 1:22, 1 Corinthians 9:1; 1 Corinthians 15:5-8. Therefore there can be no "apostolic succession" such as various church groups claim today. Only one appointed such by the Lord, and a witness of His resurrection could be an apostle in the full sense of the word. The twelve and Paul, as the special apostle of the Church, are the apostolic

gifts. These were entrusted with the planting of the Church and the nourishing of it during its infancy, as well as with providing it, for its whole earthly history (along with the rest of Scripture) with an infallible guide. This we have in the apostolic writings which are perfectly inspired of God. Thus, while we have not the apostles with us personally, we have them in their writings still with us as a foundational guide in the Church. The prophets here mentioned do not refer to the Old Testament prophets, but to those who followed Christ. The latter are New Testament prophets, men who spoke directly for God to man, often indicating in a supernatural way His mind as to the present or future. A prophet is one who brings home the truth to souls so definitely- as to connect them directly with God. Judas and Silas, for instance, are mentioned as prophets in Acts 15:32; they exhorted and confirmed the brethren. The Scriptures had not all been written when the Church began and the apostles were not everywhere, so God raised up prophets, who, in certain cases at least, were the means of divine revelation. But now revelation is complete; we have the full Word of God σ^{\wedge} . and want no more. So the need for these prophets in the highest sense is closed with the Canon of Scripture being complete. In a subordinate sense, that which would answer in our times to the prophetic work in question is the revival of truth and the powerful action of the Spirit on saints at large by recalling what was once revealed, but completely lost. The recovery of the truths of justification by faith, the nature of the Church as the Body of Christ, and His coming for it as the Christian's hope, for instance, would resemble prophetic work in this particular, though one might hesitate to call any used in the work either apostles or prophets. In the strict sense, apostles and prophets were not meant to continue, though something analogous to an apostle may be raised up at fitting times. Luther, for example, is an instance. There was a partial recall, through him, of the saints of God generally, to fundamental truth, long lost sight of. This answers in a little measure to what an apostle did.

Evangelists

"He gave ... some, evangelists." This gift, as well as those mentioned in the rest of this verse in Ephesians 4:11. is still with us today and at work in the world. The evangelist is the usual instrument used of God in gathering souls to Christ. The man to whom such a gift has been given would not be confined to one spot, but would be ready to go here and there wherever the Lord by the Spirit might lead him to minister to the need of souls.

"Evangelists, as their names would suggest, are heralds of the glad tidings, preachers of the Gospel of the grace of God, who awaken the careless and win souls to Christ. It is not everyone who is an evangelist, though all should have the love of souls, and be ready to point the sinner to Christ. But men who are evangelists by gift have a true passion for souls, true longing and travailing in birth for them; they are instructed how to present the Gospel, how to gather in the souls, to distinguish true anxiety from false and reality from mere profession. It is their joy to bring sinners to Christ, to see those who were in the world brought into the Church.

"The evangelist is a man of prayer, for he realizes that the work is all of God, and that `methods' are but of little worth. He is a man of faith, who counts on the living God. He is a student of Scripture, that he may present only the truth to souls. He is a man of courage, not fearing to go even where `bonds and imprisonment' may await him, that he may carry the glorious Gospel of the blessed God to the perishing. He is a man of energy, instant in season, out of season. He is a man of perseverance, not discouraged if he fails to see immediate fruit from his labor. Lastly, he is a

man of humility, glorying in Another, saying from the heart, 'Not I, but the grace of God which was with me.' " (S. Ridout). The evangelist's special concern is for lost and unsaved souls and his sphere of labor is the world, while that of the pastor and teacher is in the Church and among the children of God. The evangelist is like the quarryman who goes out and hews out the rough stones and brings them up from the quarry to be polished. The evangelist finds souls in the quarry of sin and brings them to Christ Who saves them and baptizes them into the Body of Christ, the Church, by the Spirit. The true evangelist will then see that these new-born babes, his children in the faith, are introduced into the fellowship and care of the Church of God also, where the gifts of the pastor and teacher are exercised for their upbuilding and nourishment. The Spirit-taught evangelist will not tell the new convert to enter the church of his choice, or of his family, as is often done, but will rather show him that he is already in the Church, a member of it, and should now recognize those who, in the place where he resides, form the local assembly of God's Church. He must search the Scriptures for God's mind and order as to church fellowship as well as follow that Word for God's salvation. In Acts 21:8 we read of "Philip the evangelist." In the eighth of Acts we have an account of his labors. This passage gives us an illustration of the nature and work of this gift. In the apostle Paul we also see the working of the gift of an evangelist, though he also possessed the gift of a pastor and teacher and was an apostle. His aim was "To preach the gospel in the regions beyond" (2 Corinthians 10:16) , which words may well be taken as a true motto for every evangelist.

Surely when we remember the Lord's words to "look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest," and that "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth labourers into his harvest" (John 4:35; Luke 10:2), we are constrained to pray for the raising up of true evangelists and the sending forth of those already gifted and called. The need is great and the work is blessed. Evangelist, "stir up the gift of God, which is in thee." "Preach the word... do the work of an evangelist" (2 Timothy 1:6; 2 Timothy 4:2; 2 Timothy 4:5).

Pastors and Teachers

These gifts are given for the care of the new-born babes in Christ and for the purpose of leading and guiding them on in the truth. All the gifts of Christ are given for the purpose of "perfecting of the saints; with a view to (the) work of (the) ministry, with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ ... in order that we may be no longer babes" (Ephesians 4:12-13, New Trans.). God wants His children to grow in the truth, so He has given these gifts for their edification and growth. This is especially the work and purpose of those exercising the gifts of pastors and teachers. The gifts of pastors and teachers are linked together in our passage. It does not say, "he gave some pastors and some teachers," but rather, "he gave . . . some, pastors and teachers." The two are mentioned together, showing they are closely allied, although they are distinct gifts and one may have the one without the other, or may possess them both. These two gifts are given for the care and help of God's people and are closely associated.

Pastors The word for "pastors" here is literally "shepherds," which gives us the thought of one who feeds and cares for God's sheep. This word designates those whom the Lord has fitted and gifted to "feed the flock of God," and whom He has called to this work. The Good Shepherd desires that His sheep not only be delivered from the enemy, but that they be guarded, led, and fed as well. The pastor looks after the Lord's people; he sees that they do not go astray and seeks to recover them

if they do. One who is a shepherd will have a sympathetic heart, administering comfort to the sheep of God in time of affliction. He will enter into their trials and problems and will seek to cheer and strengthen them, giving counsel, encouragement or correction by the application of the Scripture as needed in each case. He watches over souls and warns them if they grow careless or worldly. A pastor must not only have knowledge of the truth, but the power and gift to urge it day by day upon individuals. He applies the truth practically, dealing with heart and conscience. He interests himself in the sheep of Christ individually and labors for their state. His work may be much in sorrow, which is naturally shrunk from, but it is a most blessed work and much needed. The pastor's work is largely of a private character and he need not be a public speaker nor take a prominent place, though he may also have the gift of preaching and teaching and labor publicly as well. Such are the main characteristics of the gift of a pastor. In view of the common usage of the term, "pastor" in our day, it may be needful for us to distinguish between this and the gift of a pastor which we have been considering from Scripture. In these days one who is chosen as the minister of a particular denominational church is called "the pastor of the church." But such an office as "the official pastor of a church" is unknown in Scripture and did not exist in the apostolic church. One might be "a pastor," as to gift, in a local church, but in the Bible we never find one man spoken of as "the pastor" or "the minister" in charge of a local assembly of God's people. (We shall take up this matter of "one-man ministry" more fully in Chapter Three). The man whom Scripture speaks of in Ephesians 4:11 as a pastor, is one who possesses from Christ the particular gift and qualification of shepherding and caring for God's sheep, wherever he finds them. He is a pastor in gift and service, though he may do secular work for his living, while looking after God's people in his locality. Or he may give all his time to shepherding God's children, traveling from place to place serving "the Church of the living God." Again he may labor much in one place. All is as his Master and Head in heaven may direct. There may be several such gifted pastors in a local Lathering of the Church of God, each caring for souls, but none taking the title or place of "the pastor" or "the minister" of the congregation, for this would usurp the place of the Holy Spirit, nullifying His sovereign right to use whomsoever He will as His mouthpiece in the Church (see 1 Corinthians 12:11) . In the present day organized church systems, one may bear the title of "the pastor of a congregation," and yet not have a pastoral gift from Christ at all; he may not even be converted. Or if he is truly a child of God, he may be an evangelist in gift and yet be expected to do the work of pastor and teacher also, though these gifts may not have been given him by Christ. And because he holds the title and office of "the pastor and minister," though unfitted for it, another in the congregation, who really has a pastoral gift, is not allowed nor expected to exercise it because he is not the official pastor. Likewise the gifts of evangelists and teachers might be hindered.

All this is contrary to God's order for His Church as revealed in the book of Acts and the Epistles and is a hindrance to the free-working of God's Spirit and Christ's gifts. That there are many true ministers of Christ and truly gifted pastors serving in such an official way in the present disordered condition of the Church and doing good work for the Lord, we truly believe. We would recognize all such gifts of the Lord and honor them, though not accepting their unscriptural position. What we are speaking of now is God's order for His Church and the true pastoral gift as found in the Scriptures, which is different from man's order in the church-world of today. The Scriptural order for the ministry in a local assembly of believers, we purpose to develop more fully in the next chapter.

Returning to the subject of the characteristics of the pastoral gift, we may say that, in general, it is one of rule and oversight. The word translated "rule" in Matthew 2:6 and Revelation 2:27 means literally to shepherd and is rendered "feed" in John 21:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2, where pastoral care is spoken of. When Scripture speaks of rule, it means service and he rules or leads best who serves best and most. The qualifications for one doing pastoral care are given in general in those passages which speak of oversight and eldership, such as 1 Timothy 3:1-14 and Titus 1:6-9, for the work of elders is closely allied with that of the pastoral gift. This is seen by considering the charge given to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28 : "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God."

Surely the gift and work of a pastor is a very important and needful one and we need to pray that the Lord of the harvest will raise up and encourage many true shepherds for His sheep, for as in Christ's day, so it is now, many are "scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). May every one gifted as a shepherd, no matter how small the gift may be, be awakened to a fresh sense of his responsibility to care for God's sheep in a labor of love, and be encouraged in this noble work. If we do not have a pastoral gift, may we cultivate the heart of a pastor that cares for Christ's sheep.

Teachers-The gift of a teacher is also a very important one and closely associated with the pastoral gift we have been considering, for a pastor can hardly be of profit to an individual without being able, in some measure, to teach him. A person may teach without being a pastor in gift, but one would hardly be a pastor without teaching in a certain sense. The pastor has the people more before him, while the teacher occupies himself more with the truth. The teacher sets forth the truth of God and the pastor endeavors to see how the truth is being received individually. A God-given teacher is one who enjoys and loves to help others enjoy the truth of God. He is gifted in understanding and grasping the truths of God's Word and in noticing distinctions .of truth and shades of meaning, and is able by the Spirit's power to unfold these truths and to impart them to others. Many enjoy the truth in their own souls, but cannot help others or convey to them what they themselves enjoy. Here is where the gift of teaching comes in. One possessing this gift is able to put the truth clearly and convincingly before believers, so as to deal with the affections and carry home the truth with energy to the soul. The truth is put in so convincing a way as to bring the conscience into the light and make it feel its responsibility to follow that light. Such is the effect produced by the God-gifted, Spirit-led teacher. The teacher is especially a student of the Scriptures and knows how to apply its truths aright, "rightly dividing the word of truth." He unfolds its perfections, expounds its doctrines, and explains its difficulties. He ever loves to lead on the Children of God into the deep things of His Word and to develop the character of God in them. It is the teacher who meets the teachings of error and exposes false and evil doctrines, thus safeguarding and delivering souls. And as Christ is the theme and center of all Scripture and of all its truths, the divinely taught teacher will ever exalt Him and unfold the glories of His person and work. This will be the outstanding characteristic of his ministry.

What a valuable endowment to the Church is the gift of teachers! How necessary they are and how grateful we should be to the Lord for them, for it is He who has given every gifted teacher for the establishing of His saints, that they be not tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14). As error and evil doctrines abound on every hand, we need to pray for the raising up and encouraging on of divinely gifted teachers who can set forth the truth of God

in power and clearness, that souls may be set free from erroneous and evil teachings and Christians be built up in the faith. We need to pray, too, that His gifts to the Church may be unfettered from "religious machinery" and systems of men, so that they may freely exercise their God-given ministry under the sole direction of Christ their Head. In our day of perverse, adulterated teachings there is much need for a "teaching-Gospel" to establish and deliver souls that have been awakened. This is a mixture of a teacher's and evangelist's work and is illustrated by the Epistle to the Romans, where the apostle teaches the principles of the Gospel to Christians. In Paul were found many gifts. He was an apostle, prophet, evangelist, "teacher of the Gentiles," and a true pastor. His words to Barnabas: "Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do" (Acts 15:36), evidence the true heart of a pastor and furnish a good motto for every shepherd of the sheep of Christ.

Other Gifts-We have now considered in detail the five prominent gifts to the Church-apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, as mentioned in Ephesians 4:11. These are the greater gifts, and the last three, especially, we may expect to continue till the Church is gathered home in glory (Ephesians 4:13). These verses in Ephesians do not give us a complete list of all the gifts which Christ gives to His Church, but they are the most important ones. After mentioning these, the apostle goes on to speak of the whole Body of Christ and "that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part" (verse 16). All the members of the body have something to give for the edification of the Body of Christ. Each has his or her place and service: one may exhort publicly while another may have a little word of wisdom though never appearing in public at all. If we are to profit from the ministry of every joint and every part of the body, there must be room and opportunity given for such ministrations in the Church. A stated "one-man ministry" hinders such functioning and is never contemplated in Scripture.

Various gifts are mentioned in Romans 12:4-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:1-31. Some of these are somewhat the same gifts as mentioned in Ephesians 4:1-32, though different forms, modifications, or parts of these. The gifts of prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, and rule spoken of in Romans 12:1-21 would all, doubtless, be included under the teaching and pastoral gifts of Ephesians. The "word of wisdom" and "word of knowledge," mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 as given by the Spirit to some, would come under the gifts of pastor and teacher, respectively.

Miraculous Gifts

These gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, such as gifts of healing, working of miracles, and divers kinds of tongues and interpretations, were those which accompanied the coming to earth of the Holy Spirit and the inaugurating of the Gospel and the Church. There is no promise that they shall continue till Christ's coming, as is true of the gifts in Ephesians 4:1-32. In fact, 1 Corinthians 13:8 says tongues shall cease, and the language there is such as to differentiate between tongues, prophecies, and knowledge, and to indicate that only the latter two of the three will continue until "that which is perfect is come"-Christ's coming (see 1 Corinthians 13:8-10). In the latter part of the New Testament we read little about miracles, less and less as time passes on. Miracles in the Old Testament never continued, but were exceptional events at the beginning of a new work of God. So doubtless these miraculous powers were temporary gifts to the early Church. With the Church in disorder, division, and rebellion today, the Spirit is grieved and cannot act in full manifestation of mighty signs and thus put His outward seal on such a mass of confusion. We are

aware that various ones claim to possess these gifts today, but the true marks of the Spirit's work are missing and we cannot accept their claims as genuine.

02.09. The Individual Servant and Ministry

The Individual Servant and Ministry

We have thus far been occupied with the various gifts that are given to the Church by its ascended Head. Now we shall consider the individual servant and ministry, but before taking up this subject we would remind our readers that we are considering the matter of ministry in "the Church of the Living God," as revealed in the Scriptures. Our purpose is not to consider how ministry is carried on in the various denominational or independent churches, nor are we going to be guided by what learned doctors of theology and divinity are teaching or by what is the accepted and usual procedure as to ministry today.

"What Saith the Scriptures?" - To the obedient child of God who is exercised about doing the will of his Lord and Savior, there is but one inquiry and consideration, and that is: "what saith the scriptures?" (Romans 4:3). What are the directions of the Lord about it? To the sincere, conscientious soul, obedience to the Word of God is the most important thing; what the Lord has spoken and revealed as His will for His people and His Church is that which is to be done. To one governed by the Word of God, it matters little what man says, thinks, or does. With Isaiah of old he would say: To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

Now we truly believe that the Lord has given us explicit instructions and teachings in His Word as to the order and conduct of His Church and of His servants in ministry as well as in everything else, and that He has not left anything to our own choosing and devising. The path and order for the Church and His servants is as clearly marked out in the Scriptures as is the way of salvation and every other truth. We have but to search it out and to learn the Lord's mind about it all. In the book of Acts we have the divine account of the apostolic Church, the church Christ built, and in the Epistles, those of Paul especially, we have the inspired instructions and teachings as to its order and functioning in this world. The book of Corinthians in particular gives us church order. In these apostolic writings the divine pattern for the Church is laid down for all time. Our business is to study that pattern and follow it; we are not to do what is expedient or what we think is best for our day. In the building of the tabernacle, God's dwelling place in Israel, Moses was thrice exhorted to make everything "after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount" (Exodus 25:9; Exodus 25:40; Exodus 26:30). This same exhortation applies to us today with regard to the Church, which is the house of God in this dispensation of grace. May it be the sincere desire of writer and reader to ever follow this pattern of the Church shown us in God's Word.

One Master

We have previously pointed out that the public, spiritual ministry of preaching and teaching is to be carried on only by those who are gifted and called of Christ for this service, whether for part time or for their entire time, it matters not. Therefore, human appointments and personal choosing have no place in the sacred work of ministry. It is thus paramount that the servant of Christ ever

remember who it is that has called him and gifted him for ministry. He needs ever to keep before him the fact that Christ is his living Head in heaven and that he is to serve under Him and be directed by Him alone. The Lord said: "one is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren" (Matthew 23:8). It is of the utmost importance, then, that the servant of God keep himself free to serve his one Master and Head and not be entangled in a yoke of bondage to religious authorities and systems wherein he often cannot do what his Lord and Savior directs him to do. The apostle Paul gives us a good example as to this. He owned no one as master or authority over him but Christ. He said he did not receive his ministry from man, but from the Lord (Galatians 1:10-20). When the Lord commissioned His apostles to go out into all the world with the Gospel, He said: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18), and He has never relinquished this power and authority nor delegated it to anyone else on earth, be he Pope, Bishop, or any other person with a pretentious title. Christ works by the Holy Spirit here on earth and He is His only rightful Vicar and Vicegerent. This is clearly seen in the New Testament Scriptures, wherein is not found any foundation for religious systems where there is set up a headship having authority over Christ's ministers and to whom these ministers find themselves in a 'subservient position as are known in the church-world of today. Such authority of man is a usurpation of the authority of Christ and robs Him of His place as Head of His Church.

We are all to be subject one to another and the younger unto the elder, as Peter exhorts (1 Peter 5:5), and we are to work in fellowship with one another. There must also be discipline in the Church for the curbing of fleshly activity, but Christ alone has authority over His servants to direct them in their God-given activities. He it is who calls them to His service, endows them with gifts, and qualifies and trains them for His work. He only can direct them as to when and where they are to serve and what messages they are to give. No one has the right to come between the Lord of the Harvest and His servants or to exercise authority over them. Even the apostle Paul, who had apostolic authority such as no one has in the Church today and so could send Timothy and Titus, who were called of God to work with him, here and there for certain work, did not seek to rule over Apollos and demand that he go to Corinth. He wished him to go there and help them, but as the will of Apollos was not at all to go at that time, he left him free to do as His Master directed (1 Corinthians 16:12). The servant of Christ, who realizes that the Lord is his sole Master and Head, will then ever seek to "please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" and a servant of the crucified Savior (2 Timothy 2:4), and to do his Lord's will. If one is called to be the Lord's servant, how then can he hire out to be the servant of a denomination or a congregation and do what man tells him to do? When a man is hired, he becomes a servant to those who hire him and must please them. Does it not become him to keep himself free as the servant of Christ alone to serve Him wherever and however his Master directs day by day? Surely so. Again the apostle Paul is our noble example. To the Galatians he wrote: "do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10). The apostles referred to themselves as "servants of Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1:1). Being bought with the price of His precious blood, we are exhorted, "be not ye the servants of men" (1 Corinthians 7:23). We are to minister to man in loving service, but Christ is our Master. The Divine Call The call to the ministry of the Gospel, or to the care of God's sheep, comes from the Lord Himself as truly today as when He called the apostles or raised up others to minister His Word in the early Church (See Ephesians 4:11; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Peter 4:10). Even the true prophets of the Lord in the Old Testament were called of Him to their work. Of other prophets, who prophesied lies in His name,

He said, "I sent them not, neither have I commanded them" (Jeremiah 14:14)-words which are certainly true of many false teachers and preachers today. But every true servant of Christ will be fully conscious in his own soul of the divine call to service. The Holy Spirit works in the hearts of those whom the Lord would use as His ministers. His call is realized in their soul, and the heart is exercised and made willing to respond to the heavenly summons. Many examples of this divine calling are given in the Old and New Testaments, which the interested reader may profitably consider. (See Isaiah 6:1-13; Jeremiah 1:1-19; Mark 1:16-20; Mark 3:13-14; Acts 9:1-43; Acts 22:1-30 as a few examples.)

Without such exercises- of heart, produced by the Holy Spirit, the realization of the divine calling, and some measure of gift for it, no Christian should venture forth into the public ministry of Christ. For it is not given to us to choose our place or service in the Body of Christ; this prerogative belongs to the Lord alone. Our place is to learn His will for each of us individually and to fill the place assigned us. If one goes forth to preach or teach and is not Called of God to this holy work, he will not be sustained of God in it and will break down sooner or later, or fail in accomplishing the Lord's work. Those whom the Lord calls He fits and qualifies for service, and without this divine fitting the ministry cannot be Performed aright. The nature and extent of the call to public ministry greatly varies. The Lord of the Harvest will make it plain to every exercised servant whom He calls, just where, how, and to what extent he should serve. One may be called to labor locally, another to travel about in the homeland, and another to go to distant heathen lands. One may be called, after due preparation and training in God's school, to give all his time to the work of the Lord, while another may be called to continue in his daily vocation while preaching and teaching in his spare time.

It is a mistaken idea that one cannot carry on an earthly vocation for his livelihood and still be a minister of Christ, or that it is only those who devote all their time to the service of the Lord who are His ministers. There is no such thing in Scripture as the division of Christians into the two classes of "the official clergy" and the "laity," as is commonly known today, or the thought that the ministry is a kind of honorable profession to be taken up for a living, as are other professions. It is rather a holy calling and a heavenly service to be performed as a labor of love to Christ in dependence upon Him for sustainment therein. While it is true that "The laborer is worthy of his reward" (1 Timothy 5:18), and that "they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14), yet we also have the example of Paul, the great apostle, who labored night and day making tents and preaching the Gospel without charge (Acts 18:3-4 : 1 Thessalonians 2:9). In this connection we would quote the weighty words of C. H. Mackintosh: "We are Convinced that, as a rule, it is better for every man to work with his hands or his brains at some bread-winning calling, and preach and teach as well, if gifted to do so. There are exceptions, no doubt, to the rule. There are some who are so manifestly called, fitted, used, and sustained of God, that there can be no possible mistake as to their course. Their hands are so full of work, their every moment so engrossed with ministry in speaking or writing, teaching publicly and from house to house, that it would be a simple impossibility for them to take up what is termed a secular calling-though we like not the phrase. All such have to go on with God, looking to Him, and He will infallibly maintain them unto the end."

Preparation and Training

Having considered the servant's one Master and his divine call, we may now speak of the matter of his preparation and training for the ministry of Christ. Here, again, the Scriptures must be our guide and not opinions of men or the present day customs and practices of the church world.

Follow Him-When Jesus desired to call twelve apostles as His servants for the carrying on of His great work, He went down to the sea of Galilee, called Simon, Andrew, James, and John from their work of fishing and said unto them: "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men" (Mark 1:17) . He chose simple, unlearned fishermen with just what they possessed and called them to follow Him, promising that He would make them to become instruments that He could use in the wonderful work of saving the souls of men. Their preparation and training for this work was to be gained by following Him each day, by being in His company and learning of Him. He would teach them all that was necessary and would make them real soul winners for Himself.

Mark 3:14 also tells us that "he ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that he might send them forth to preach," etc. Companionship with Jesus Christ is that which alone can fit and train every gifted and called servant of Christ for His service. In the solitude of one's chamber He is found by prayer and meditation over His Word, and there He teaches many things. From this secret place one can go forth in the energy of the indwelling Spirit of God to be a witness for Christ to men. He is the great Teacher and none can teach like He can. He knows what lessons each servant must learn and how to prepare and fit each one for their particular service in the Body of Christ.

School of Practical Experience

Gifts are given by the Lord to those whom He calls, but they are not fully perfected. The gift needs to be perfected and developed by a long and steady growth in the school of God. When the Lord calls one for His work, He puts that one in His school and does the training Himself in various ways and circumstances and by various instruments under His supervision. God would have us learn one from another in His school also. We are to profit from the experiences of others. This is the school of practical experience from which the servant never graduates, but goes on serving and learning day by day in communion with his Master, the most patient, gracious, and thorough Teacher of teachers. In this school one serves and works for the Lord as he learns, and learns as he serves. Practice is combined with theory and truth is learned in the heart as well as in the head, as it ever must be. This practical school of God is the only training school for Christ's servants with divine sanction, which is found in the Bible, and it is still the only school that can properly train and fit His servants today. No school or college of human device can improve upon God's way for His ministers. There is no education like that which comes by learning at the Master's feet and in daily contact with men.

God chooses men for the ministry from all classes of society and from all walks of life to reach all classes of people. He takes them with just what they possess of learning and experience and by His Spirit and His Word, He does the rest. This is seen in both the Old and New Testaments. Moses, learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, is called from the palace to the backside of the desert where he is taught in God's school for forty years while he shepherds sheep. Then he is sent out in God's service. Gideon was called from his threshing of wheat to the work of God. David is taken from the sheepfolds, Elisha from behind the plow, Ezra from the scrolls of the law of Moses, and Saul of Tarsus from his great learning and high place in Judaism to the feet of Jesus,

from whence, after some time of solitude in Arabia, he was sent out for the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we allow God to call and train His servants, we will have a divinely-constituted ministry, taken from all ranks of society, from the highest to the lowest and fitted to reach all sorts and conditions of men without the aid of a religious college. We shall have the greatest intellects expounding the Word as they learned it on their knees and simple ones spelling out the message in the same manner. In most of the present day theological colleges and seminaries a maximum of human learning is imparted with a minimum of Bible teaching. And it is in these very places that Modernism, with its Satanic attacks against the holy Scriptures and the very foundations of the true Christian faith, has rooted itself and is being taught to those who are to become the future ministers. The result is that their faith in the Bible is undermined and they, in turn, go out with teaching that will lead souls to perdition. Such is one result of introducing a plan contrary to the Lord's method of teaching His servants.

Jeremiah 1:5 and Galatians 1:15-16 show that God marks out and calls His servants even before they are born. In the light of this He fashions the vessel for His purposes and orders all the circumstances of his after life. Everything which he passes through is calculated of God to prepare and train him for his divine calling in life, even though he may as yet be unconverted and unaware of his heavenly calling. The apostle Paul is an example of a man possessing a most remarkable natural character, as well as extraordinary training and acquirements before conversion, all of which were providentially ordered of God to fit him for his special place of ministry in the Church of God.

Study the Word The instructions of Paul to the young servant, Timothy, show what is most important in equipping the minister of Jesus Christ. "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine . . . Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them" (1 Timothy 4:13-16). "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things ... Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth ... From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Timothy 3:15-17) . That which will fit each gifted servant for the Lord's work is a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures as taught by the Holy Spirit's ministry, coupled with a holy walk in the truth and experience in service. The servant needs to study and to meditate upon the Bible and not upon man's books of theology and the like. Notice, it is heeding the Word of God which makes the man of God perfect and thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Separation Necessary

Another important point to notice in connection with our subject is found in 2 Timothy 2:19-21 : iniquity must be departed from. "If a man therefore purge himself from these (vessels to dishonor), he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." Here is one essential in true preparation for the Master's use: obedience to the truth of God and separation from all that is contrary to His Word. One cannot expect to be taught of God or used of Him in service while remaining in fellowship with that which he knows to be evil.

Ponder this well. dear Christian reader. The parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30 presents to us another vital principle in connection with service. "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Matthew 25:29). The Lord shows in this parable that the one who faithfully used his talents was given more, while the one who made no use of his talent had it taken away. As we use the ability and knowledge in divine things which the Lord has given; He gives more to use for Him. Thus the servant grows in the school of God and increases unto more usefulness. The foregoing we are persuaded is God's way of preparation and training for His servants, as many have proven.

Ordination The common thought and current teaching in the church world is that one who would be a minister of Jesus Christ must first be educated in a religious school or college and then be ordained (which means appointed and invested with ministerial functions) by a human body of religious authorities. He is then an ordained minister, fully competent and duly authorized to carry on the work of sacred ministry in the Church. Without this formal ordination by man, one is not, according to general theological thinking, a full-fledged, authorized minister and cannot perform all the services of a duly recognized minister such as administering baptism and the Lord's supper.

Such is man's present day teaching, but "what saith the scripture?" is again our inquiry. What does God's Word teach on the subject? This should be our chief concern. It matters not what man says or thinks, be he ever so learned or authoritative.

God Ordains In the Scriptures we find that there is an ordination by God spoken of which is most important. In discussing the subject of the preparation and training of God's servants, we have referred to Jeremiah 1:5 and Galatians 1:15-16 to show that God marks out and calls His servants before they are born and prepares them from birth on. We would now quote these passages in connection with the subject of ordination.

Jeremiah says: "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou tamest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." And Paul says in Galatians: "The gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ ... But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." In 1 Timothy 1:12 Paul thanks God for putting him into the ministry and in 2 Timothy 1:8-11 he speaks of the salvation and calling in Christ and of "the gospel: Whereunto I am appointed a preacher and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles." So also in regard to the twelve apostles Mark 3:14 tells us they were ordained, empowered, and sent forth by the Lord Himself.

Now these verses distinctly speak of ordination and appointment to the ministry by God Himself. Paul definitely tells us that the Gospel he preached and the ministry which was given him to teach was not after man or received from man, not even of the apostles who were before him. If, then, Paul was called and appointed of God and his ministry was not learned from the apostles who preceded him, how could they or anyone else ordain him? And why would he, or anyone else, need man's ordination and authorization when God, the highest authority, had called, appointed, gifted, and taught him? No Human Ordination-There was no human ordination or authorization in connection with Paul or any other prophet or preacher in Scripture either in the Old Testament or

in the New Testament. Yea, Paul even says that when God called him, he conferred not with any human persons, neither went he up to Jerusalem to receive, as it were, the consent and authorization of the apostles there.

Now the same principle which we see activating Paul and others in the book of Acts holds true today. God's ordination is supreme and sufficient. For if Christ has given one a gift to use for Him, and has called and ordained that one to His service, he is surely unfaithful if he goes to any body of men to ask their leave to use it, or fails to use it because man does not approve. The gift carries with it the responsibility to use it and the call of God entails obedience to Him. Of course, claims as to gift and calling always need to be proven. Those who are spiritually minded will readily discern whether one has a gift and is called of God or not and will encourage or discourage the Claimant accordingly. For the Church or any man to ordain or appoint a teacher, pastor, or evangelist who is gifted of the Lord and empowered by the Holy Ghost to preach and teach Christ, would be to set aside as insufficient the appointment and act of Christ. Surely it becomes the Church to recognize and accept Christ's gifts; this is obedience to Him and not to do so is disobedience to Christ. The Church cannot give spiritual gifts, therefore it has no right to choose its ministers or ordain them. It does give material things and is entitled to choose its deacons and appoint those who are to take care of its funds and other business, but this is quite different from appointing ministers of the Word. The Scriptures do speak of elders or bishops being ordained by the apostles Paul and Barnabas or by those who had a special commission from the apostle for this purpose, but never do we read of anyone being ordained of man to preach the Gospel or to teach or be a pastor over a church. There is no such thought in Scripture; it is entirely of human invention. Elders and bishops (the same thing-see Titus 1:5-7) were appointed men holding office or local charges in the Church and are never to be confused with gifts for ministry. Office and gift are quite different things. Elders and deacons and their offices will be before us later; our subject now is that of spiritual ministry and ministers. To put the matter very definitely, we would here assert that there is not one single passage in the whole Bible which shows that a gifted person, such as an evangelist, pastor, or teacher must be ordained of man before he can perform spiritual ministry and be an authorized minister in the Church of God. We will now look at a few instances in the inspired historical book of the early Church, the book of Acts, which prove our statement.

Let us consider the case of Stephen in Acts 6:1-15; Acts 7:1-60. Who ordained him to preach and minister the Word of God? He was one of those chosen by the multitude of disciples to serve in the business matter of caring for the widows in the Church and was appointed or ordained by the apostles for this work-the work of a deacon. Later we find him speaking the Word of God and preaching to the Jewish council, yet there is not a word mentioned about his being ordained of man for this ministry, neither do we read anything of the Church seeking to hinder him in preaching because he was only ordained to the work of a deacon. What man-ordained preacher ever preached so powerfully or witnessed so faithfully and in so Christ-like a manner as this unordained Stephen?

Consider also Acts 8:4. After the persecution which arose after the martyrdom of Stephen, "they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the Word." Who ordained them or who hindered their preaching? The same chapter records the successful preaching and evangelization work of Philip, who, like Stephen, had only been appointed to the work of a deacon. There is not even a hint given of his being ordained of man to preach, not even by Peter and John who came

down from Jerusalem to Samaria to help in the work. Acts 11:19-23 gives further details as to the work of those scattered abroad after the death of Stephen, but Barnabas, who was sent to them from the Church at Jerusalem, did not ordain them or even attempt to do so. Such a thing was never thought of.

Let us look now at Acts 13:1-4. This has long been the stock passage which theological leaders have been ready to cite as authorization for ordination of ministers. The passage tells us that certain prophets and teachers were in the Church at Antioch; five are named, and "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia. Does this Scripture mean that Barnabas and Saul were now ordained to the ministry? Both had been for years actively engaged in the work of the Lord and had previously spent over a year at Antioch teaching the people and establishing the believers there. How absurd to think that now this infant Church should have the power to ordain them or to make them apostles! Certainly ordination is not implied here at all.

Recommendation and Fellowship

What, then, is expressed in the fasting, praying, and laying on of hands upon Barnabas and Saul? Laying on of hands was practiced way back in Genesis in the case of a father or grandfather laying his hands on the children. It was a sign of recommendation to God by one who was conscious of being so near to God that he could count upon His blessing. So in the New Testament this act was frequently practiced with no pretense of conferring any ministerial character. Here in Acts 13:1-52 it expressed a solemn and precious act of fellowship with these honored servants of Christ in the special missionary work to which the Holy Spirit had called them. So Acts 14:26 clearly expresses the real import of the act when it says they later "sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled."

Recommendation and fellowship with the servants of God, then, is the real thought expressed in Acts 13:1-4. This Scriptural precedent and principle still remains for us today and should be practiced. Every called and gifted servant of Christ should have the recommendation, fellowship, and prayers of his home Church or Assembly of believers in going forth into the work of the Lord to which the Holy Spirit has called him. Everything should be in order so that his brethren can commend him to the work of the Lord and to the fellowship of Christians and the Church elsewhere. This is Scriptural and godly order with regard to the servant of Christ and his ministry, while ordination is unscriptural. Thus the extreme of independency and disorder in the Church is avoided on the one hand, and that of the clerical system, which rests upon ordination for its authority, on the other hand.

Special Case of Timothy

Before closing our subject we must touch upon the peculiar case of Timothy where, by the laying on of apostolic hands, a very special effect was produced. We here quote the words of Wm. Kelly: "Timothy was designated by prophecies beforehand for the work to which the Lord called him. Guided by prophecy (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6), the apostle lays his hands upon Timothy and conveys to him a direct power by the Holy Ghost, suited to this special service he had to

accomplish. Along with the apostle the elders who were in the place joined in the laying on of their hands. But there is a difference in the expression the Spirit of God employs, which shows that the communication of the gift depended for effective energy not in any way on the elders but only the apostle. The particle of association (meta) appears where the presbytery are spoken of, that of instrumental means (dia) where the apostle speaks of himself. It was an apostle that communicated such a gift. Never do we hear of elders thus conferring a gift: it was not an episcopal function but an apostolic prerogative, either to communicate spiritual powers or to clothe men authoritatively with a charge . . . but who can do this now?" The interested reader may also consider the cases of Judas and Silas in Acts 15:22-34 and that of Apollos in Acts 18:24-28. These also ministered acceptably without ordination by man. Underlying the whole system of ordination by man is the teaching of succession-the power to hand down front one to another the authority supposedly originally received from God-bishops succeeding apostles, etc. But we have seen that there was no such thing as apostles ordaining for spiritual ministry, so how can there be a Scriptural succession of what did not exist? It is all a figment of man's inventive mind. As to apostolic successions there is no such thing in Scripture. In closing this subject let us consider 1 Peter 4:10-11, which contains salutary words of guidance for the servant of Christ, giving the remarkable simplicity of God's order for the exercise of ministry: "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever."

Flattering Titles

Closely associated with ordination by man, is the giving of the flattering titles, "Reverend," "Father," etc., to the ordained one. Since this practice is so universal in Christendom, it likewise needs to be examined by Scripture.

It is striking that the word "reverend" is found only once in the Bible, and that in reference to God. It appears in Psalms 111:9 : "He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name." This verse clearly tells us that God's name is reverend and we never find any other name in Scripture called thus. How then can any mortal man, be he ever so godly and worthy of esteem, be given or take a title which is only given to God in His Word? Reverend is an attribute which only belongs to God. The word is never used in connection with any servant of God in the Old or New Testaments. Therefore this title should never be used by any servant of God today or be given by anyone to any minister. The Word of God surely teaches that Christ's servants and ministers should be esteemed and honored. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 says: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." And 1 Timothy 5:17 exhorts that even "the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine." But nowhere is there even a hint given that they who labor thus should be called "Reverend," etc. Our esteem and honor is not to be shown by giving them a title that only belongs to God. This is irreverence to Him and certainly displeasing to Him to whom all honor and glory belong. The words of C. H. Spurgeon are worthy of note in this connection: "There are a great many reverend, very reverend, and right reverend sinners in the world. For myself I desire to be known henceforth simply as a servant of God, and I

want my walk and conversation to prove that I am His servant indeed. If I, the servant of God, am to be esteemed in any measure by my fellow Christians, it shall not be because in front of my name, an attribute stolen from God has been placed by an ordaining council, neither shall it be because my collar is buttoned at the back, or my coat is clerical in cut, but only for my work's sake."

God spoke of Moses in these words-"My servant Moses ... is faithful in all mine house" (Numbers 12:7). What a great honor this is: to be called by God, "My servant"! So the apostles in prayer to God spoke of themselves as "thy servants" (Acts 4:29). And in Php 1:1 Paul and Timotheus call themselves "the servants of Jesus Christ." Surely this is honor enough. The Lord said to His disciples: "be not ye called Rabbi (Master or Teacher) : for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23:8-11). Certainly these words are plain enough against all present day ministerial titles.

Even back in the days of Job, Elihu said: "Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my maker would soon take me away" (Job 32:21-22). It is surely out of place for followers of the rejected and crucified Savior to bear flattering titles. We are rather to expect to receive abusive titles from the world as did our Lord. "Doctor of Divinity" was never given as a title by the Holy Spirit to any man, and the word "pastor" (with a small "p"), describes the nature of one of the gifts from the Lord and is not used as a title in Scripture. But we do read of "Philip the evangelist" (Acts 21:8).

Material Sustainment

How are the material needs of the servant of the Lord to be supplied in the Master's service? This is a very practical question and one that exercises every true servant at one time or another. We may be sure that the Word of God also gives us important principles and precepts regarding this necessary phase in the work of ministry.

First of all, let us call to mind what we have repeatedly stressed concerning ministry in the Church, that Christ is our living head, that the gift for ministry is from Him, that He has called the servant to His service and He alone is his Master unto whom service is to be performed. The Lord Himself engages His own servants and sends them forth into His vineyard and they are the "servants of Jesus Christ," as we have just seen.

Look to the Master-When these facts are definitely realized in the soul, the servant will be lifted up in the dignity of faith by the empowering thought and consciousness of being the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the matter of material sustainment in God's work will become simple and definitely clear. He will then do as all servants do; they look to the master whom they serve for their pay; the master may use whomsoever he will as his paymaster. So if one is truly a servant of Christ he will look to Christ for all his needs. His business is to serve the Lord. The Lord's business is to care for His servant. Yea, He has definitely promised to do so and He will use whomsoever He will as His paymasters in caring for His servants and rewarding them for their labors in His vineyard. The servant's path, then, is one of dependence upon his Lord and Master and faith in Him for material sustainment. He is not to depend upon even the Lord's people, much less the

unsaved of the world. Though the Lord would use His people as His instruments in supplying His servant's needs, the servant must ever look to the Lord alone. "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him" (Psalms 62:5), is ever the attitude of true faith. He has said: "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine" (Haggai 2:8), and "every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills . . . the world is mine, and the fulness thereof" (Psalms 50:10; Psalms 50:12), so it is a little matter for God to meet the needs of His servants, as many have happily proven for years. The Lord told His disciples: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on ... neither be ye of doubtful mind ... your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Luke 12:22-30). If one spends his time and strength in faithful service to the Lord, He will prove to that one that every promise of His mouth is true and reliable. This has been the blessed experience of every servant who has gone forth in simple faith in the Lord for all. When Peter said: "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" Jesus answered, "every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matthew 19:27-29). The Lord will be no man's debtor; He is a faithful and gracious Master who rewards even for giving a cup of cold water in His name. None ever serve Him without compensation.

Labor in Love and Faith But the service rendered must ever be a "labor of love" (1 Thessalonians 1:3), "not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind" (1 Peter 5:2). Paul could say, "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me" (Acts 20:33-34). He also said, "I seek not yours, but you," and "we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying" (2 Corinthians 12:14; 2 Corinthians 12:19). The true servant of Christ works not for money or to make a living; he labors out of love to the Lord and precious souls, seeking their blessing and not their possessions, trusting the Lord for the needs of himself and his family, thankfully accepting whatever is given to him as from the Lord whom he serves. One whose heart is thus full of love and faith will not need to hire out to man or sign up for a stipulated salary, giving certain services in return. The love of Christ will constrain him to be ever abounding in the work of the Lord with his eye upon his Savior and Lord who has promised to supply every need.

It is important, also, to notice what Paul wrote to the Corinthians regarding his service. "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward . . . What is my reward then? Verily that. when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge" (1 Corinthians 9:16-18). This should be the aim of every Gospel preacher-to present the free gift of God, eternal life in Christ Jesus free of charge. If the collection plate is passed around after the service and the people are urged to give, unsaved as well as saved, the Gospel is not made free of charge. In John's day, the brethren went forth for Christ's name's sake "taking nothing of those of the nations" (3 John 1:7, New Trans.). The unsaved are not expected to give to the Lord's work; the saved are to do it cheerfully out of a free will.

Responsibility of Christians

Thus far we have been occupied with the servant's path of faith and trust in the Lord for material sustainment. There is, however, another side to the matter, namely, the responsibility and privilege

of the Lord's people to give of their means for the work of the Lord and the care of His servants, and to minister to those who minister unto them. The servant looks to the Lord for his needs, and the Lord looks to His people to meet those needs in a natural, practical way. A few Scriptures will bring this side of responsibility before us.

Many times in the Old Testament Israel was exhorted to bring their tithes and free-will-offerings unto the Lord and to remember the Levite who served the Lord entirely (see Deuteronomy 12:1-32). And in 1 Corinthians 9:7-14 Paul speaks of what the servant of the Lord has a right to have of material things. "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? ... Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." So also Galatians 6:6 exhorts: "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." In Luke 10:7 the Lord said to His disciples: "in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire," or "of his reward," as 1 Timothy 5:18 puts it. His servants are entitled to what is given them. In 1 Corinthians 16:2 we are told: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." Thus the Lord's people are exhorted to periodical, personal, and proportionate giving unto His interests.

Power for Ministry

Ere closing this subject of "The Individual Servant and Ministry," we must speak a little of the power for this heavenly ministry. We have stressed the need of having a gift from the Lord for ministry, but the mere possession of a gift is not enough. There must be power for its fruitful exercise. That power is found in the Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer. Power is not eloquence or oratory that holds people under its spell. It is the power of God at work in a human vessel and acting upon hearts. Upon this divine power the apostle Paul depended. "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2:4). For successful ministry, then, there must be definite dependence upon the Holy Spirit to guide one and to give forth the word in living power. For this the Spirit must be ungrieved in the vessel, and the servant in much exercise of prayer and self-judgment. All learning and ability must be laid at the Lord's feet, and one must wait upon Him as an empty vessel to be filled and used by the Spirit. Then there will surely be power in ministering the unsearchable riches of Christ. And such a Christ given and Spirit-used ministry is assuredly all that the Church of God ever needs. In this connection we would like to bring before the reader the following lines by C. H. Mackintosh on the secret of ministry: -

"The true secret of all ministry is spiritual power. It is not man's genius, or man's intellect, or man's energy; but simply the power of the Spirit of God. This was true in the days of Moses (Numbers 11:14-17), and it is true now. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). It is well for all ministers to bear this ever in mind. It will sustain the heart and give constant freshness to their ministry.

"A ministry which flows from abiding dependence upon the Holy Ghost can never become barren. If a man is drawing upon his own resources, he will soon run dry. It matters not what his powers may be, or how extensive his reading, or how vast his stores of information; if the Holy Ghost be

not the spring and power of his ministry, it must sooner or later, lose its freshness and its effectiveness.

"How important, therefore, that all who minister, nether in the Gospel or in the Church of God, should can continually and exclusively on the power of the Holy Ghost! He knows what souls need, and He Can supply it. But He must be trusted and used. It will of do to lean partly on self and partly on the Spirit of God If there be aught of self-confidence, it will soon be made apparent. We must really get at the bottom of all that belongs to self if we are to be the vessels of the Holy Ghost.

"It is not-need we say it?-that there should not be holy diligence and earnestness in the study of God's Word, and in the study, too, of the exercises, the trials, the conflicts, and the varied difficulties of souls. Quite the reverse. We feel persuaded that the more absolutely we lean, in self-emptiness, upon the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, the more diligently and earnestly we shall study both the Book and the soul. It would be a fatal mistake for a man to use professed dependence upon the Spirit as a plea for neglecting prayerful study and meditation. "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all" (1 Timothy 4:15).

"But after all, let it ever be remembered that the Holy Ghost is the ever living, never-failing spring of ministry. It is He alone that can bring forth, in divine freshness and fulness, the treasures of God's Word, and apply them, in heavenly power, to the soul's present need. It is not a question of banging forth new truth, but simply of unfolding the Word itself, and bringing it to bear upon the moral and spiritual condition of the people of God. This is true ministry." May the Lord help all His dear servants to ever give forth their ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit.

R. K. Campbell

Chapter 22

02.10 Chapter 3: ITS LOCAL ASPECT - The Ground of Gathering

Chapter 3 ITS LOCAL ASPECT The Ground of Gathering

02.11. A. Scriptural Ground of Gathering

A. Scriptural Ground of Gathering

Thus far in our studies we have been considering the Church of God at large in its universal aspect. We have seen from Scripture that it is one body on the whole earth with members one of another, joined together in the unity of the one Spirit and linked with Christ its Head in glory. It is also in its entirety the Bride of Christ and the House of God, His dwelling place on earth through the Spirit. Then, we have seen that the gifts for ministry, which the ascended Christ has given, are for the whole Church, "for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12).

Having had the general features common to the Body of Christ or the Church of God as a whole before us, we come now to its local aspect, or the Church in a particular locality. For the unity of the Church was not to be invisible, but organic and manifest, "that the world may believe" (John 17:21). To be manifest in any particular place, it is evident that the Church must take some definite, visible form, . and this is what we shall now consider. In the Scriptures we find the word "Church" used in three different ways. First, "the Church" unlimited, meaning the whole Body, as we have been considering it. Second, "the Church" limited to some special locality, as "the church which was at Jerusalem" (Acts 8:1; Acts 11:22), or at Antioch (Acts 13:1), at Ephesus (Acts 20:17) , etc. Third, we have the plural, "Churches," giving us the Assemblies collectively in any given country: as Judea (1 Thessalonians 2:14; Acts 9:31), of Galatia (1 Corinthians 16:1; Galatians 1:2), of Asia (1 Corinthians 16:19) , etc., or more generally, including sometimes all assemblies of God as "the care all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:28) ; "the churches of God., (2 Thessalonians 1:4). In these last two references and usages of the word, we have the thought of local Assemblies or gatherings of believers, as distinct from the one Body of Christ viewed in its entirety. We shall now consider what constitutes a local assembly of the Church of God and the relation between these local gatherings and the entire Church. The Church of God in a Place A consideration of the opening of the First Epistle to the Corinthians will give us much instruction on this point. "Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Corinthians 1:2). Here the apostle uses the name "Church of God" which is the title of the whole Body of Christ, and applies it locally-"the Church of God which is at Corinth." Then he describes those whom this title embraces-"them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints" ("to be" is not in the original). This means, then, that all the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ there formed the Church of God which was at Corinth.

Let us be clear about this point and notice from this Scripture that the Church of God in a given locality includes every born-again believer, every member of the Body of Christ. In the apostle's day all the believers in a locality were found going on together in one visible testimony and Assembly as the manifest expression and representation in that place of the whole Body of Christ. So Paul could write to the Corinthian Assembly, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Corinthians 12:27). But in our day of ruin of the visible testimony and multiplied

divisions, it is no longer true that all the real Christians in any locality are found together in a visible testimony or united assembly as at the beginning. They are found scattered in many varying groups. Therefore, no one gathering of believers can claim today to be "the Church of God" in a certain place, for that title embraces every true believer in Christ in that community.

Ground of Gathering

However, while it may be impossible today, because of the Church's divided condition, to assemble together all the true believers of a locality, the only Scriptural ground of assembling (upon which all believers were gathered together in the beginning, and the only ground upon which they ever could be gathered together) still remains for us at this present moment. That ground is the practical owning of the truth of the one Body of Christ.

Whatever the ruin about us and no matter how many denominational bodies there may be around us, it is still true that "There is one body" (Ephesians 4:4), and God still sees His scattered people as one body. Therefore, to faith, the truth of the one Body of Christ on earth still remains as the only Scriptural ground of gathering together. So while no group of believers today could claim to be "the Church of God" in a locality, those who recognize and act only upon the truth of the one Body of Christ, can truly say that they meet on the ground of the Church of God in their locality. The ground upon which they gather together being simply that of being members of the Body of Christ at large, and not as those adhering to certain doctrines, forms of church governments, or denominational parties and sects. Recognizing only all true members of the Body of Christ and receiving them as such is the only Scriptural ground of gathering together as the Church of the living God. This is the first vital principle of the Church in its local and visible aspect.

Represents the Whole Church

Each local Church or assembly of believers is but a part of the whole Body of Christ and is to be an exact representation of the greater Church. It should express the Church as a whole, even as a tiny dewdrop reflects, in miniature, the same sky as does the mighty ocean. The characteristics of the whole Church are to be seen in each local part. There must be nothing in the local Assembly inconsistent with the truths we have previously been considering as true of the whole Church. Each Assembly is a part of the Assembly at large and represents and acts for it in each local place. Therefore, the only basic platform upon which believers can ever Scripturally gather together anywhere is as members of the Body of Christ and as a local representation of the whole Church.

Thus believers gathered together in the first days of the Church and so they must gather today if they would act as members of the Church of the living God and obey and please their Lord and Head. Any other ground of gathering together, such as coming together as Presbyterians, Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists, Catholics, Pentecostals, Fundamentalists, etc., is a denial in practice of the truth of the one Body of Christ and recognizing other bodies instead.

Unity of the Spirit

If there is one Body of believers in Christ, which God recognizes why not refuse all other man-made bodies and gather together simply as members of His Body? This would not be making another body or unity, but recognizing the unity which the Spirit of God has made among all true

believers who have been baptized by one Spirit into the Body of Christ. So Ephesians 4:3 exhorts us to endeavor to keep that unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The error of Christendom has been in making a unity or union of their own, one larger or smaller than the unity of the Spirit, admitting unsaved persons who are not members of Christ's Body and not baptized by the Spirit into this unity, or of shutting out true, godly members of Christ's Body by their sectarian principles and platforms. Neither is to be the principle or the practice of God's Church.

02.12. B. The Divine Gathering Center

B. The Divine Gathering Center

Having considered the divine ground of gathering, we shall now speak of the divine center around which God's Assembly is gathered. What center or gathering-point is the right one for believers to rally to and to meet around? What center properly become "The Church of the Living God," whose Head is Christ in glory? In a day like the present, when so many varying names are set up as gathering centers, and when almost every new idea becomes the center or gathering-point of some new religious association, it becomes us to earnestly search the Scriptures and to have divinely formed convictions as to what God's appointed center of gathering for His people truly is.

"Unto My Name"

Let us turn to Matthew 18:1-35, where we have the second mention of the Church by the Lord. Its formation was then still future, but here He laid down some great principles for His Church as to discipline and gathering together. He promised to ratify in heaven its decisions in His name and to grant them anything agreed upon and asked by but even two. And then He gave the great reason for it all in those sublime words of the glorious promise of Matthew 18:20 : "For where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them" (New Trans.).

Here we have what has been called the great Magna Charta of the Church, guaranteeing its rights and privileges, and herein is presented the only divine gathering center for God's Assembly. "Gathered together unto my name"; this is the gathering-point which God has ordained for His children. He would have them gathered unto the worthy name of His beloved Son, the name of their Lord and Savior, the Name above all names. No other name would do and there can be no other center but Christ for those who truly love Him and would be loyal to Him. To those thus gathering together unto His precious name alone, be they but two or three or two or three hundred, He vouchsafes His blessed presence "there am I in the midst of them." He is personally present and takes His place in the center of the gathered Assembly. And this is the place we should give Him, too, the place of pre-eminence, the place of presidency and of authority -the central place. Genesis 49:10 also gives us an instructive prophecy as to Christ being the gathering center for His people. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." So also Psalms 50:5 says, "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." And in John 20:19-26, when the disciples were assembled together on the first day of the week, we see the resurrected Savior coming and taking His place in their midst as their center and saying, "Peace be unto you." Here was the first fulfillment of His promise to be in the midst of His own gathered together unto His name, and multitudes through the centuries have experienced this since that day. A Living Person In later years Peter wrote to the believers about the Lord Jesus and said: "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious" (1 Peter 2:4). And Paul wrote to the Hebrew Christians saying: "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Hebrews 13:13).

It was around the Person of a living Christ, then, that God's people were gathered in the first century and around whom they all should gather today. It is not around a doctrine, however true; or around an ordinance, however important; or around a wonderful preacher, be he ever so godly; but around a living, divine Person that the Church is to gather. It is not said "To which coming," but "To whom coming." We do not come to a thing, to an organization, or to a human leader, but to a divine Person, our Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit leads only to Jesus and His precious name and not to the names of men or dead organizations. And the word is, "he that gathereth not with me scattereth" (Luke 11:23). Anyone leading souls to any other name but Christ's is scattering and not gathering, for when other names are introduced beside that blessed Name, the sheep of Christ are scattered. Gathering to the name of Jesus alone, around His blessed Person, then, is another great cardinal feature of the local aspect of the Church of God, and where this is not found God's Assembly cannot be. Not Denying His Name It follows, then, that if we are truly gathered unto Christ's name and Person we will not hold up other names as banners around which we rally and under which we are enrolled or be called by names such as those of the denominations about us. Those truly gathered to Christ's worthy name will disown all other names which displace and dishonor that worthy Name, and will call themselves only by His precious name -Christians, or other names given in the Scripture which mean those belonging to Christ. To call ourselves by the names of men and denominations is to deny His adorable name and grieve Him, our Lord and Savior. To the Church at Philadelphia Christ could say, thou "hast not denied my name" (Revelation 3:8), which shows how He values our being true to His name. If we are upholding other distinguishing names beside His wonderful name, or the names He has given us in His Word, and gathering under such names we cannot claim to be truly gathered together unto His blessed name. James 2:7 speaks of "that worthy name by the which ye are called." Shall we set it aside for another name? God forbid.

Five names are given in the Word of God to describe the people of God and they fit each believer and are uniting names. They are Christians, Believers, Brethren, Saints, and Disciples. These names are common to all believers and are not sectarian as are the many names which have been adopted by professing Christians in our day. For believers to adopt any name which does not include all true believers in Christ is to become a sect and to deny the truth of the One Body.

Truly the name of Jesus is all-sufficient for the Assembly of God. There is everything in that name, not only for our salvation and our individual needs in the Christian path, but for all the urgent wants and various needs of the Assembly, for worship, communion, ministry, discipline, everything. Reader, is that precious name sufficient for you as a gathering center, and are you gathered unto His worthy name and His adorable Person? If not, why not?

02.13. C. The Divine Leader

C. The Divine Leader

We desire now to dwell upon the important fact of the Lord being personally present in spirit in the midst of those thus gathered unto His Name, of the place which should be given Him as the leader of the Assembly, and of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly.

"There am I in the midst"

These blessed words of the Savior guarantee without a doubt His personal presence to those gathered together by the Spirit unto His Name. This is not only a promise, but a living reality, as thousands have experienced who have acted in simple faith upon this promise and have gathered together unto His adorable Name alone. This precious promise is sufficient for faith. The presence of Jesus in the midst of the gathered Assembly is quite enough; He is all-sufficient.

Surely it naturally follows that if He, the blessed Savior and Head of the Church, is present in the midst, He is certainly there to direct and lead the Assembly and should rightly be given His place as the leader of the gathering and be depended upon as such. All eyes should be upon Him who has come to occupy the central place and every heart should be waiting upon Him to lead by the Holy Spirit. Let us not forget, also, that the One in the midst is Lord of all and the only one who has the right to exercise authority in the Assembly. "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" and "hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church"(Acts 2:36; Ephesians 1:22). Christ is Lord in the Assembly and should be owned as such and given His place as the only rightful leader and authority in the Church. Where He is owned as lord and leader, there will be subjection to Him and behavior consistent with His lordship; there will be rule and order according to the mind and will of God.

We would here quote the true and stirring words of C. H. Mackintosh: "If Jesus is in our midst, why should we think of setting up a human president? Why not unanimously and heartily allow Him to take the president's seat, and bow to Him in all things? Why set up human authority, in any shape or form, in the house of God? But this is done, and it is well to speak plainly about it. Man is set up in that which professes to be an Assembly of God. We see human authority exercised in that sphere in which divine authority alone should be acknowledged. It matters not, so far as the foundation principle is concerned, whether it be pope, parson, priest, or president. It is man set up in Christ's place. If Christ be in our midst, we can count on Him for everything. "Now in saying this, we anticipate a very probable objection. It may be said by the advocates of human authority, 'How could an assembly ever get on without some human presidency? Would it not lead to all sorts of confusion? Would it not open the door for everyone to intrude himself upon the Assembly, quite irrespective of gift or qualification?'

"Our answer is a very simple one. Jesus is all-sufficient. We can trust Him to keep order in His house. We feel ourselves far safer in His gracious and powerful hands than in the hands of the most attractive human president. We have all spiritual gifts treasured up in Jesus. He is the

fountain-head of all ministerial authority. He hath the seven stars (Revelation 1:16). Let us confide in Him, and the order of the Assembly will be as perfectly provided for as the salvation of our souls. We believe that the name of Jesus is, in very truth, all-sufficient, not only for personal salvation, but for all the exigencies of the Assembly-for worship, communion, ministry, discipline, government, everything. Having Him, we have all and abound.

"This is the real marrow and substance of our subject. Our one aim and object is to exalt the name of Jesus; and we believe He has been dishonored in that which calls itself His house. He has been dethroned, and man's authority has been set up.

Even in the Assembly of God at Corinth, where there was most grievous confusion and disorder, the inspired apostle never hints at such a thing as a human president, under any name whatsoever. 'God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the assemblies of the saints' (1 Corinthians 14:33). God was there to keep order. They were to look to Him, not to a man, under any name. To set up man to keep order in God's Assembly is sheer unbelief, and an open insult to the Divine Presence.

"Now, we have been often asked to adduce Scripture in proof of the idea of divine presidency in an assembly. We at once reply, 'There am I'; and 'God is the author.' On these two pillars, even had we no more, we can triumphantly build the glorious truth of divine presidency -a truth which must deliver all, who receive and hold it from God, from every system of man, call it by what name you please. It is, in our judgment, impossible to recognize Christ as the center and sovereign ruler in the Assembly, and continue to sanction the setting up of man." (The Assembly of God by C. H. M.).

Presence of the Holy Spirit Not only is the Lord Jesus Christ present in the midst of His gathered disciples, but God the Holy Spirit is also there. We have spoken previously of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the Church and would now draw attention to this great truth in connection with our present subject. This new and special, personal presence of the Holy Spirit on earth indwelling the believer and the Church according to 1 Corinthians 6:19 and Ephesians 2:22, as a consequence of the great work of redemption and of the glorification of Christ in heaven, is one of the great foundation truths of this dispensation and a notable characteristic of Christianity. Yet the presence of this Divine Person in the Church is little thought of, recognized, or counted upon. The presence of the Spirit of God on earth has been ignored by Christendom and He has not been given His rightful place as leader and director in the Church. In fact, His presence is denied in practice by placing a man in the place of leadership and authority and thus setting aside the Holy Spirit. When the Lord gave the disciples the promise of the coming to earth of the Holy Spirit, He said the Spirit would teach them all things and guide them into all truth. He also spoke of Him as the Comforter, or "parakletos" (Greek), one called alongside to help and manage our affairs (John 14:26; John 16:13). In 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; 1 Corinthians 14:1-40 we find the Spirit of God as the author of the various operations, manifestations, and activities in the Assembly. "All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will" (1 Corinthians 12:11). These Scriptures surely show that the Holy Spirit is in the Assembly to guide and lead and teach and has the sovereign right to use whomsoever He will as His mouthpiece for prayer, praise, or ministry.

Liberty of the Spirit

If we further consider 1 Corinthians 14:1-40, which is the special chapter on order in the Assembly, we see therein the fullest liberty given for any man to be used of the Spirit in the meetings of the Assembly. There is praying with the spirit, singing with the spirit, blessing with the spirit (a man's own spirit led of the Holy Spirit), giving of thanks, speaking with a tongue, prophesying, teaching, and giving out of a psalm or a doctrine by various ones.

Such expressions as "If any man speak," "ye may all prophesy," and similar ones (1 Corinthians 14:5, 1 Corinthians 14:13, 1 Corinthians 14:27, 1 Corinthians 14:31), show that there was liberty for any brother, not under discipline, to take part in the Assembly as led of the Holy Spirit. This is the way the early Christians gathered together in the liberty of the Spirit and under the sovereign guidance of the Divine Spirit.

True, there may be an abuse of this liberty of the Spirit, as there was in the Corinthian Assembly, which this 14th chapter shows too much activity, the flesh active in some. What then is the Assembly to do? Correct it by the Word of God, using the very instructions which the Spirit of God has given in this 14th chapter. This is the simple divine remedy. But notice that in spite of the disorder which came into the Corinthian Assembly, they were not told to change this order of the liberty of the Spirit and to appoint one man as the minister in charge and the leader of the Assembly. The inspired apostle simply teaches them how to take part with profit and exhorts: "Let all things be done unto edifying," "ye may all prophecy one by one," and "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:26, 1 Corinthians 14:31, 1 Corinthians 14:30).

Now these instructions were not only for Corinth but for every Assembly in every place, as this epistle was addressed "Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth ... with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:2). So these directions as to the liberty of the Spirit, etc., are binding upon believers in every place today as well as then. And still the churches of Christendom go on with their man-made arrangements and programs of worship, etc., in distinct opposition to what is laid down for us in Scripture. Is the reader associated with such systems of men where the Holy Spirit is thus set aside and not given His rightful place as leader and ruler? If so, let him heed the Word and "come out from among them." Let him "go forth therefore unto him without the camp" (2 Corinthians 6:17; Hebrews 13:13) and gather only unto the precious name of Jesus where He is in the midst and the Spirit is owned as the divine leader.

New Testament Assemblies

Throughout the book of Acts, which records the history of the Apostolic Church established by Christ, we ever find the Holy Spirit as the leader of the Assemblies of Christians in every place and using whomsoever He would as His mouthpiece. Never in this book or in any of the Epistles is there even the slightest mention or hint of any one person appointed as the pastor, minister, or priest in charge of an Assembly of Christians. There was apostolic authority and those associated with the apostle Paul, as Timothy and Titus, in the establishing of the Assemblies, and there were the gifts of pastors, teachers, evangelists, etc., but nowhere do we read in Scripture of one man set up to be the minister and director of an Assembly, for this would have been a usurpation of the place and authority of the Holy Spirit.

Notion of a Clergyman This is strongly rooted in the hearts of the multitudes today, that is, the idea of a humanly appointed office, a class of men having the exclusive privilege of preaching,

teaching, ministering communion, etc. A great teacher and man of piety has well spoken the following concerning this practice: "I believe the 'Notion of a Clergyman' to be the sin against the Holy Ghost in this dispensation. I am not talking of individuals wilfully committing it, but that the thing itself is such as regards this dispensation, and must result in its destruction. The substitution of something else for the power and presence of that holy, blessed, and blessing Spirit, (is the sin) by which this dispensation is characterized, and by which the unrenewedness of man, and the authority of man, holds the place which alone that blessed Spirit has power and title to fill, as that other Comforter which should abide for ever" (J. N. Darby). Solemn words but true. In Conclusion--Let us rejoice in the blessed truth that God, the Holy Spirit, is truly present in the Assembly of even the two's and three's gathered to the precious name of Christ, that He is the active agent and power to act in man and to lead and guide the Assembly, and that the Lord Jesus Himself is in the midst. What more is needed? May we have simple faith to believe it, act upon it, and walk in submission of heart to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. And is it not true, in view of all that has been before us from the Scriptures, that whatever does not own in practice the divine leadership of the Holy Spirit and maintain the liberty of the Spirit to use any member of the Assembly whom He wills cannot be owned as a true Assembly of God, Scripturally gathered?

02.14. D.The Divine Way of Ministry

D.The Divine Way of Ministry

Realizing that the statements of divine truth we have just given, which are so little known or believed, are just the opposite of the central principle of church organizations of our day, and are quite different from what is taught, practiced, and commonly accepted as right in Christendom, we would enlarge upon this subject, seeking to help the perplexed or exercised reader. Our desire is to clearly set forth from the Scriptures God's way of ministry in the Assembly, so that the divine way to carry on a testimony for Christ may be plainly seen in contrast to man's way. Perhaps some readers are saying, "How can these things be? How can meetings or services ever be carried on without having some man in charge?" A careful study of the New Testament will answer these questions and all others that may arise. But if we would be helped and guided aright in this matter, we must turn our eyes and thoughts away from all that man is doing and saying and consider only what God has written for our instruction in His Word. We would urge our readers to search the Scriptures and to see whether these things are so, as the Bereans did in Acts 17:11.

Luke 22:7-13

Let us turn to this passage and notice a few things typified for us here. We especially desire to point out one point in particular which bears upon our immediate subject, but we shall dwell a little on the whole passage while these verses are before us since they are helpful in our present consideration of the local aspect of the Church. When the Lord told Peter and John to prepare the Passover supper they asked, "Where wilt thou that we prepare?" So we may ask also today, "Where shall we go to worship?" The Lord then told them to go into the city and follow a man with a pitcher of water whom they would meet. This man may typify for us the Holy Spirit and the pitcher of water the Word of God. We are to go where the Spirit and the Word of God would lead us. Peter and John were then to go into the house into which the man went and to say to the goodman of the house, "The Master saith unto thee, where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?" The Lord further told them that they would be shown a large upper room furnished and there they should make ready (v. 12). So they went and found as He had said and ate the Passover supper with the Lord in this room; therein the new institution, the Lord's supper, for the Church was also instituted following the Passover meal.

All this is full of meaning for us. The Lord met with His disciples and celebrated the Passover in a separate upper room in the house. So now it is true spiritually that the place where the Lord meets with His own is a separated place-separated from all that grieves and dishonors Him in Christendom as stated in 2 Timothy 2:21. It is also a large upper room. So also the Assembly of the living God, where the Lord is in the midst, should meet in an heavenly atmosphere as members of the Body of Christ with a large heart that makes room for all the members of that body, who wish to come as such in all sincerity, purity, and truth. When Christians meet thus in simple dependence around the Lord as their center and leader, He will furnish them with all that is needed to carry on a testimony for His name. He who is in the midst is the head of the Church and

has given gifts unto men for the work of ministry, as we quite fully considered in our previous study on gifts and ministry. He is presented to the Church at Philadelphia as the One who has the key of David to open and shut (Revelation 3:7). He also has the key of the treasure and storehouse of God and can richly supply His people who depend upon Him in simple faith.

Christ Provides The Lord furnishes His people with ministerial gifts (Ephesians 4:11-16), and where the Holy Spirit is depended upon and free to act, He will call forth, energize, and use the gifts that are present in each local Assembly for the edification and care of the saints and for the preaching of the Gospel to the unsaved. There is no need to go out and hire a preacher, etc. Wherever believers come together around the Lord, there He has given talents and provided some ability for ministry. Though it may be given forth in all simplicity and feebleness, it is of the Lord, for five words in the Spirit are better than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue, or of man's eloquence and not of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:1-4; 1 Corinthians 14:19). The gifts of the Lord are various and each believer has a gift of some kind and a function to perform as a particular member of the Body of Christ. "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Ephesians 4:7). These gifts may need to be discovered, stirred up, and developed by use, but they are there and are given for the help and blessing of all. When believers meet in the name of the Lord alone, recognizing the liberty of the Spirit to use whom He will, each believer is made to feel his responsibility to do his part in maintaining a testimony for the Lord, and so gifts and abilities are discovered, called into activity, and developed. Whereas, when one man is appointed to take over the entire responsibility of ministry, there is not this activity and development of all the gifts which may be present in the Assembly. The Scriptural path, then, for the Lord's people is for them to gather together around the Lord simply as Christians in dependence upon the Holy Spirit to use the gifts in their midst and to raise up others. He may also send some gifted servant of God to them on a visit, whoever and whenever He chooses, for their building up, for the preaching of the Gospel, or for any special spiritual help which may be needed. The Lord nourishes and cherishes His Church, and, as its Head and Bridegroom, He will furnish every local gathering with all that is needed if He is depended upon. This we have seen again and again and many have proven it to be true. Thus it was with the New Testament Assemblies. They met together as believers, edifying one another and receiving whatever servants of the Lord were sent to them by Him. Search the book of Acts and the Epistles and see if this is not so.

Teaching and Admonishing One Another

Paul wrote to the Assembly at Rome: "I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another" (Romans 15:14). He also desired to visit them to impart unto them some spiritual gift (Romans 1:11). To the Assembly at Colosse he wrote: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another" (Colossians 3:16, New Trans.). This they, as brethren in Christ, were able for, and so also are brethren in the Lord today. Even though no distinctive gifts may be present in a small Assembly, this simple service of teaching and admonishing one another as the Spirit of God directs and enables is always possible for Christians who will meet in all simplicity around the Lord to study His Word. The great failure of the Church has been that of which the apostle warned the Colossians, "not holding fast the head, from whom all the body, ministered to and united together by the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God" (Colossians 2:19, New Trans.). Joints and bands are not great members of the body, but they minister to and unite

the members and thus the body increases. If Christians will only hold fast the Head, keep their eyes on Christ, and lean on Him, they will be edified and blessed in meeting together. If this is not done, they will not be thus blessed and human means will be resorted to, as one can see has occurred all about us today.

Necessary Gifts not all in One Person

This is further emphasized for us in Romans 12:5-8. "Thus we, (being) many, are one body in Christ, and each one members one of the other. But having different gifts, according to the grace which has been given to us, whether (it be) prophecy, (let us prophecy) according to the proportion of faith; or service, (let us occupy ourselves) in service; or he that teaches, in teaching; or he that exhorts, in exhortation; he that gives, in simplicity; he that leads, with diligence; he that shews mercy, with cheerfulness" (New Trans.). Different gifts are given to different ones and all are needed for the edification of the saints and the carrying on of an Assembly testimony. Let each one do the work which he is gifted for; this is God's way for ministry in the Church. So Peter also writes: "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another" (1 Peter 4:10). When the Corinthians were making parties around various servants of the Lord, choosing one gifted man as their favorite, Paul wrote them: "all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas ... all are yours" (1 Corinthians 3:21-22). They would shut themselves up to one gift, whereas the Lord had given them all these gifted brothers with their different gifts for their blessing. So we should desire the ministry of all the various gifts which the Lord has given us and not choose one gift to be our "minister" to the exclusion of others. Scriptures speaks of "a minister" in the Church at large, but never of "the minister" in a local Church; the difference is apparent. The Assembly is bound to receive Christ's ministers that may be sent to them and to recognize them with thankfulness, that is, when all is in godly order.

Leaders That there are leaders and chief men in the Church and local gatherings, whom God uses for the blessing and guiding of His people, Scripture assures us. Acts 15:22 speaks of Judas and Silas as "chief men among the brethren," and Hebrews 13:7 exhorts: "Remember your leaders who have spoken to you the word of God" (New Trans.) But notice that they are in the plural and that they were not officially appointed as leaders, but were those whom the Holy Spirit was using as such. The Holy Spirit must ever be the leader and must be left free to use whomsoever He will.

Distinction Between Meetings

We refer to the difference between meetings of the Assembly as such (for worship and the Lord's Supper, for prayer, or for any other purpose for which we may call Assembly meetings) and meetings in which Christ's servants exercise their ministry on their own personal responsibility, (Gospel meetings, Sunday Schools, and special meetings where addresses are given for teaching and ministering to the Lord's people). These last named meetings, which are convened or carried on by those individuals who have such work laid upon their hearts and are gifted by the Lord for such services, are of a different character from reunions of the Assembly and are under the responsibility of those who undertake them. Such meetings may be conducted by one person or several working together, while meetings of the Assembly for worship, prayer and Bible readings, or open meetings for ministry are open for any to take part whom the Spirit would use.

All God's people are priests and can draw nigh into the holiest for worship and prayer, therefore any brother (the women are exhorted to be silent in the Church-1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:11-12 -that is, they are not to speak), can praise the Lord audibly and thus lead the saints in worship or prayer. Peter tells us that believers are "an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," and also "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5; 1 Peter 2:9). We trust these lines may help our readers to see more clearly God's way of ministry in the Church. If any should ask, "Is it practical? Will it work?" we answer, "Assuredly so. It worked in the New Testament Assemblies and it works today bringing blessing in thousands of Assemblies throughout the world where these Scriptural principles are acted upon."

02.15. E. Elders, Overseers, and Deacons

E. Elders, Overseers, and Deacons

"Elder" is a word that has descended from the patriarchal times of Israel (Exodus 3:16). The family was the model of government, and in the family the father, as the elder, had authority. This was transferred to the nation, where the heads of houses became the heads of the nation and in this sense we have frequent mention of the word in the Gospels and in the book of Acts (Matthew 26:3; Matthew 26:47; Acts 4:5; Acts 4:8). In Acts 11:30 we have the first application of the word to the leaders in the Church of God and thereafter it is quite frequently so used.

Elder was, as we have seen, the ordinary title of the leading men among the Jews—the rulers. It simply means an older person, and is used apart from the idea of office in such passages as 1 Timothy 5:1; 1 Timothy 5:19; 1 Peter 5:1; 2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1. Older men were naturally qualified for the work of oversight and from them the apostles appointed bishops, or overseers, which has the same meaning as "bishop." Elder, then, designates the person, and bishop or overseer, the work or office to which he is called. (From "The Church and Its Order," by S. Ridout). 1 Timothy 3:1 speaks of the "office of a bishop," and Titus 1:5-7 shows that elders and bishops, or overseers, were the same persons.

Overseers and deacons were local officials in the Church and must be distinguished from gifts. Elders and deacons might or might not have the gift of preaching or teaching. Such gift was quite independent of their special office. There might be, and were, many elders and deacons in any given church, and yet there was still the fullest and freest liberty for any one to exercise his gift in ministry when the whole Church came together in one place. Elders were not to preside in a public meeting, but to oversee, feed, and care for the flock of God (Acts 20:28).

Apostolic Appointment In Acts 14:21-23 we have the first of the two instances recorded in Scripture where elders were ordained. This was in the Gentile Assemblies which were formed by the missionary labors of Paul and Barnabas. After preaching the Gospel in various places, they returned again to the scene of their former labors at Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch and confirmed the souls of the disciples and exhorted them to continue in the faith and "ordained them elders in every church." Elders were not ordained in an infant Church. Time had to be given for the development of spiritual and moral qualifications and the manifestation of those who were gifted with wisdom and competent for such work of shepherding or ruling the Church of God. The qualifications required for elders are given in 1 Timothy 3:1-16, and in Titus 1:6-9. But notice who it was that ordained or appointed elders in these Churches. It was not the Churches who chose and appointed their own elders, as is practiced today, but it was the apostle Paul and Barnabas who ordained them. They were appointed by apostolic authority. Notice, too, that in Titus 1:5, the only additional place in Scripture where we read anything about ordaining elders, it was Titus who was to do the ordaining in the Assemblies in Crete, as Paul had appointed him. It is a probable inference that Timothy also ordained elders as an apostolic delegate since he was given instructions as to the qualifications needed for such, but there is no mention made that he did. No

Such Authority Today

We find, then, throughout the Bible that none but an apostle or an apostolic delegate was empowered to appoint elders. Moreover, we read not a word therein about perpetuating this apostolic power of appointment after the apostles left the earth. Not a word is given to Titus or Timothy about continuing this task, or that Titus himself was to continue it after the apostle was dead. Neither was Titus to appoint whom he pleased, but the apostle assigned him the sphere of his commission-in Crete only. He was apostolically commissioned to ordain elders in Crete and could produce an inspired letter of instruction to him personally. Who can do anything similar today?

Furthermore, we never find in any part of Scripture any such thought expressed as a congregation choosing and appointing its elders. Therefore, in view of the foregoing undisputable facts, we affirm that there is no man or body of men now upon earth possessing power to ordain elders, nor was that power or authority ever committed to the Church.

What then are to do? Are there to be no elders or overseers in the Church of God today? Thank God, there are, but they are not, and cannot be, officially appointed as such because there is no apostolic power or authority to ordain them. The Holy Spirit Appoints

Acts 20:28 will help us as to God's path for us today. Paul, here addressing the Ephesian elders, said: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers to feed the church of God." It is only God the Holy Ghost who can make and appoint overseers over His flock and He still does so today. We believe that when Paul or Titus ordained elders, they did so as acting by the power and direct authority of the Holy Ghost and their appointment was to be regarded by the Church as divine. In the absence of such apostolic power or delegated authority, we can still rely upon the Holy Spirit to raise up qualified and able men and energize them to take the oversight of His flock and to feed His lambs and sheep. It was the Holy Ghost at work then, and it must be the Holy Ghost now. If God raises up an elder or elders in an Assembly who go after the wanderers, warn the unruly, comfort those cast down, counsel, admonish, and guide souls, it surely becomes us to thankfully own such and to esteem them very highly for their work's sake. We are to love and acknowledge them as those who are over us in the Lord (1 Timothy 5:17). Such are doing the needful work of overseers and are to be looked up to as such, though they cannot be officially appointed for there is no duly authorized power to do so. Is it not becoming for us now to say that, not being apostles, we do not pretend to exercise their function in ordaining elders, though we do heartily recognize men possessed of the requisite qualifications for this local office and doing the work of overseers? This may seem very strange to some of our readers who have been used to churches appointing elders, but we ask you to search the Scriptures and see whether these things are so or not.

Instructions for Our Day

If we search the Bible, we will discover in the Epistles that a state of things substantially similar to our imperfect condition today is described for our help and profit. The Lord in His wisdom let such wants be felt in the early Church. Thus the apostle was inspired to write Epistles to churches where there were no elders ordained as, for instance, the Epistles to the Thessalonians and to the Corinthians. The last was distinctly a disorderly church, and elders might have been thought useful

there. But there is not the least word or hint about elders throughout the Corinthian Epistles.

While the Assembly at Corinth abounded in gift, elders are seen nowhere among them. Yet the household of Stephanas devoted themselves regularly to the service of the saints and the apostle beseeches the brethren to submit themselves to such, and to every one who helped and labored (1 Corinthians 16:15-16).

Likewise in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 we have the very important instruction given to the saints who were a young church, yet they were told to own those that labored amongst them. "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." The presence of ordained elders is not necessary in order to have and to own those who are over us in the Lord. There is much of importance for us now in that Scripture, for we, like they, have no official elders.

Thus God provided instructions for Assemblies where there would be no official oversight, and herein is seen His far-reaching wisdom in meeting the difficulties of days such as ours when a valid authority to ordain, as the apostles did, is not left on earth. We also see for our encouragement that at Corinth and Thessalonica, where there were no official elders, there were those raised up of God in the midst of the saints who showed spiritual ability in guiding and directing others and who manifested power to meet difficulties in the Church and to baffle the efforts of the enemy. In the one Epistle the apostle exhorted subjection to such and in the other Epistle he spoke of them as "over you in the Lord." This provision from the Lord we can expect even today and subjection to and esteem for such becomes every one in each Assembly. As already stated, the qualifications for an overseer are given in 1 Timothy 3:1-16 and Titus 1:6-9. They are clear enough and require no explanation here. Strong moral qualities are required as well as spiritual capacity for the work. But let us note in closing this subject that the apostle says, "If a man desire the office of a bishop (overseer), he desireth a good work" (1 Timothy 3:1) . The work of overseer in God's Assembly is a good and most necessary work which should be desired by those duly qualified. Sometimes this good work is left undone in Assemblies which would indicate a lack of spiritual exercise and desire on the part of some whom the Holy Spirit would undoubtedly use. Thus perhaps some need to be exhorted to desire to do this good and needful work. This we find Peter doing in his first Epistle, chapter five. There he urges the elders to take the oversight of the flock willingly, setting an example for the others. A crown of glory from the Chief Shepherd will be the reward.

Deacons

It remains for us now to briefly consider this branch of service in the Assembly. "Deacon" is an untranslated Greek word and always rendered simply "servant," or "minister." The work of a deacon is to look after the temporal, -material things of the Assembly, while the elder has to do with the spiritual care of the Church. This word deacon is only found in Php 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13, the latter passage giving the qualifications required for such. We get an example of the service of the deacon in Acts 6:1-6 where seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom, were chosen by the Church in Jerusalem and appointed by the apostles over the material business of caring for the widows in the daily ministrations. Though they are not called deacons here, this is what they were servants of the Church in administering the material things. Here we notice that the Church chooses and the apostles officially appoint them. For if the Church gives

money and material things it is God's will that she should have a voice in the selection of those whom she feels will, with wisdom and good conscience, distribute these offerings wisely. So today the Church can choose those it wishes to take care of its material things. But as to formal appointment and laying on of hands, this likewise can only be done by apostles if we would follow the divine pattern closely.

02.16. F. Divine Authority

F. Divine Authority In previous pages we have touched somewhat upon this subject, but it is perhaps necessary to speak a little more in particular on this matter of authority in the Assembly. We have pointed out that the Lord Himself, who is exalted in heaven as head over all things, is present in the midst of even the companies of two or three gathered to His name, and thus is the only rightful leader and authority in the Church. But we do not only have the presence of the Lord and of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly as authority; we have also His written Word, the Holy Scriptures, as our guide and authority, wherein the mind and will of God as to all things is clearly revealed. The authority of God is expressed for us in His Word and it is ours to follow that inspired and authoritative Word and to act upon its precepts and injunctions. "Thus saith the Lord" is the divine authority for the Assembly of the living God and, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is all-sufficient for any action required. In these days of creeds and church by-laws and rules, it is necessary to stress the fact that the Holy Scriptures are the all-sufficient guide and sole standard of authority for the Church. Since we have the inspired Word of God with complete instructions as to His mind and path for His people, what need have we of creeds and by-laws? Can man's words state truth more clearly than God's? Surely not. Nothing less than the whole Bible is sufficient for us and nothing more is needed. Also we have the Holy Spirit, the author of that Word, present with us to interpret it to us and to guide in applying it to present day difficulties and conditions. From Matthew 18:17-20, we learn that the Lord has also given authority to the Assembly gathered unto His name to exercise discipline and to bind and loose with heaven's ratification. "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I, in the midst of them." Wherever they may be, the Lord is in their midst and gives His own weight of authority to the two or three gathered unto His name. Their acts are bound in heaven or loosed in heaven as the case may be. They are recognized there as binding and authoritative. This is the authority which the Lord has conferred upon His Assembly, the authority to act for Him in His name on earth. To quote the words of another: "What is the real power, the real source of authority, in discipline? The presence of Jesus: not simply that the discipline is the act of a voluntary society which excludes one of its members from its bosom, but that it is the act of an assembling according to God, assembled in the name of Jesus, and acting in His name and by His authority, to maintain the holiness which belongs to that name. The weight of an assembly's act is not from the individual voice or judgment of its members, but from the Lord's being in the midst of them when gathered together" (J. N. Darby). No Absolute Authority

However, the Assembly is not infallible and therefore is liable to err in its judgments and actions. If it gets its eye off of the Lord it may act in the flesh and not in the Spirit and so miss the mind of the Lord in its midst. So it must ever be subject to the check of God's authority expressed in the Scriptures. The Lord has not given the Assembly unconditional and absolute authority to act independently of Himself or to set aside or go beyond His will as clearly expressed in His Word; the promise is, therefore, conditional. When He is waited upon and there is subjection in the Spirit

to the written Word which casts its light upon facts and persons, He, who is there in the midst, will make good His gracious power, guide the meek in judgment, and teach them His way (Psalms 25:9). The words of Wm. Kelly on the foregoing subject are very opportune. We quote them here for our readers: "It was reserved for the anti-church to claim irrevocable authority along with immunity from error. Where difference exists among the faithful, it is folly to claim a character which attaches only to their agreement in the power of the Spirit. And the apostle disclaims what the Roman pontiff arrogates, that clave errant the decision binds. The inevitable effect, soon or late, will be destruction, not edification. It is not Christ, but human assumption, not to say presumption.

"Whether it be an individual's assumption or an assembly's, or whether as in one notable theory it be the chief along with that which represents the church as a whole, such a claim is fictitious and destructive of the Lord's glory. The promise is strictly conditional, not absolute; and never was there an apparent failure save when the condition was broken, and then in very faithfulness the Lord gave not His sanction. To be unconditionally true, there ought also to have been infallibility, which belongs not even to an apostle but to God alone. The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way; and this now in the church by His own guaranteed presence and leading, though nothing seem harder to conceive where the several wills of so many would naturally act diversely. But He is there in the midst to make good His gracious power when truly waited on, with subjection in the Spirit to the written word which casts its divine light on facts and persons; that all without force or fraud may act as one in the fear of God, or those who dissent may be manifested in their self-will, whether they be few or many. "But the taking for granted that a given sentence is irrevocable, because it is the opinion of a majority or even of a whole assembly, in the face of facts which overthrow its truth or righteousness, is not only fanatical (I do not say illogical only) but wicked fighting against God. In such a case, humbling as it is, most humbling for an assembly to judge itself hasty and mistaken in pretending to the mind of the Lord, where it was only the illusive influence of prejudiced leaders or the weakness of the mass who prefer general quiet in floating with the stream at all cost, or both causes or others also, the only course at all pleasing to the Lord is, that the error when known be confessed and renounced as publicly as it was committed, being due to Him and to the church, as well as to the individuals or company, if there be such, more immediately concerned. To keep up appearances in deference to men, however respected, if mistaken and misleading, to give expression to high-sounding terms or to vague begging the question of truth and right, in order to cloak an evident miscarriage of justice, is unworthy of Christ or of His servants. This was far from the apostle who, as at the beginning of this epistle (Second Corinthians) he disclaimed lording it over the faith of the saints, at the end proves his sincere desire, even when grievously slighted, to avoid if possible sharp dealing with those who had afforded grave occasion, and to use the authority which the Lord gave him for building up and not for casting down." (2 Corinthians 13:10) . Notes on II Corinthians, pages 245-247. We shall not speak further here about discipline and the binding and loosing of the Assembly, as this will come before us when we consider the subject of discipline in the Church.

Seven Divine Things

We have previously dwelt upon this wonderful verse of Matthew 18:20, but while it is before us again in the above paragraphs we would like to point out a little more of the fulness of this golden verse of promise. It has often been said that there are seven divine things in this verse. They are

as follows:

1. "Where ----- the divine place, 2. two or three the ----- divine number, 3. are gathered----- the divine power, (gathered by the Holy Spirit) 4. together ----- the divine unity, 5. unto my name----- the divine name and gathering center, 6. there am I ----- the divine Person and presence, 7 in the midst."----- the divine center. May our hearts be filled with the blessed fulness and sufficiency for us in this simple, yet magnificent promise of the Savior.

R.K. Campbell

Chapter 29

02.17. Chapter 3: ITS LOCAL ASPECT - Meetings of the Assembly

Chapter 3: ITS LOCAL ASPECT Meetings of the Assembly

02.18. G. Meetings of the Assembly

G. Meetings of the Assembly In our meditations thus far on the local expression of the Church we have had before us some of the main principles that should govern and constitute a Scripturally gathered Assembly of God. We have seen that it must meet on the ground of the One Body of all believers, owning and receiving each other as members of that spiritual Body of Christ and owning no other body. Secondly, it must be gathered together unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone as its center and uphold that precious name to the exclusion of all others. Thirdly, the Lord must be given His rightful place in the midst as the divine Leader and the presence of the Holy Spirit owned and He be depended upon to guide and divide to every man as He will. Fourthly, the ministry and spiritual ministrations in the Assembly are to be carried on, not by one man appointed, official minister-but by any of Christ's gifts to the Church and by members of the body, edifying one another, all under the Holy Spirit's direction and in His power and energy. Fifthly, the work of oversight in the gathering is to be done by those who are morally and spiritually qualified as elders and raised up and directed by the Holy Spirit for this needful work. And the deaconal work is to be done by those chosen by the Assembly for this work. Sixthly, the authority for its actions is the Lord in its midst and the Word of God which it acts upon.

Having had these groundwork principles before us, which we may say give us the structure and divinely provided working machinery, so to speak, of the local expression of the Church of the living God, we are ready now to consider the various meetings or gatherings of the Assembly. But before speaking in detail of these various meetings let us look in a general way at the first local Church established by the Lord and the Holy Spirit. The Church at Jerusalem In Acts one we find a company of some 120 believers together in the upper room after the ascension of the Lord to heaven (Acts 1:15). There they continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, waiting for the promised descent of the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended, as promised, and by one Spirit they were all baptized into one body (1 Corinthians 12:13) and were filled with the Spirit. Here the Church of God began its existence and the first Christian Assembly in a locality was formed by the Holy Spirit. While in the beginning the Church here was composed entirely of Jews and the distinctive truths as to the hopes and calling of the Church were not known as yet, we may view this Assembly at Jerusalem as a pattern Assembly for us in many ways. It was the beginning of the Church and it is always instructive to get back to the beginning of things. Here the Holy Spirit wrought as He meant things in general to continue, so we must go back to that point to learn the truth. From the inspired account in Acts two, we see at once that the Holy Spirit was the leader in the Assembly. They began to speak the wonderful works of God as the Spirit gave them utterance. Then Peter, energized and directed by the Spirit, preached to the multitude about the crucifixion, resurrection, and glorification on high of this Jesus whom they had rejected and slain. The Spirit of God used his words to bring conviction in the hearts of the hearers and worked repentance unto salvation in their souls. Then those that received his word were baptized with water in the name of Jesus and some three thousand were added to this original Assembly of converted believers. This whole company now "continued steadfastly in the apostles'

doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." They had all things in common, continued daily with one accord in the temple, broke bread from house to house, and ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart (Acts 2:42-47).

Leading Characteristics

Thus we learn of the activities and gatherings of this divinely ordered Assembly at Jerusalem and it is well for us to note some of the things which characterized its testimony as witnesses unto Christ. These proper characteristics were enumerated by the Lord in Acts 1:8.

- (1) They were together first of all with one accord and continued in prayer and supplication.
- (2) They were baptized by the Spirit into One Body, filled, directed, and empowered by the Spirit and bore witness unto Christ Jesus.
- (3) In their witnessing they presented Jesus Christ, called upon men to repent, and proclaimed remission of sins in His name; thus they were active in preaching the Gospel of salvation in Christ.
- (4) Those who received this word of salvation, they baptized 1 and thus began to carry out the commission of the risen Lord to make disciples of all nations and to baptize them in the name of the triune God.
- (5) Then they all went on steadfastly together in the apostles' doctrine: the teaching which the Lord gave the apostles the Word of God, and in happy fellowship one with another.
- (6) They broke bread from house to house daily and thus often remembered the Lord in His death for them, as He requested (Luke 22:19-20).
- (7) They were also one in their ordinary activities of life, sharing together their possessions and eating their meals with gladness and singleness of heart.
- (8) They continued together in collective prayer and had favor with all the people. More details of this Assembly at Jerusalem are given in the following chapters of Acts, but space forbids further enlargement of the subject. Such were the activities of the virgin Church. May the Lord help us to get back to "that which was from the beginning" and to be found likewise gathered in principle and practice. We may say that these activities were the natural outflow of the divine nature which was in these new-born souls and of the Holy Spirit who indwelt them. This new nature hungers and thirsts for the Word of God and craves fellowship one with another in the enjoyment of the precious things of God. It yearns to express itself in prayer and praise to God, for worship and renewal of strength, wishes to obey God's Word, and desires to share with others what it possesses. And it is the delight of the indwelling Spirit to lead souls out in these activities.

Thus these new-born instincts, which the Holy Spirit develops and strengthens, leads souls to want to gather with one another around the Lord for teaching, fellowship, worship, prayer, and the proclaiming of the Gospel. Accordingly, meetings of the Assembly naturally begin for these purposes. This is as it should be, and Hebrews 10:24-25 exhorts us: "let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." In the beginning, the Church met every day, but this did not continue. Now as we

see the evil day of apostasy and wickedness approaching, we need all the more to come together often with fellow believers. With this introductory survey of the activities of the virgin Assembly at Jerusalem before us, we shall go on with detailed consideration of various assembly meetings.

02.19. 1. For Breaking of Bread and Worship

1. For Breaking of Bread and Worship

We have seen that the original Assembly at Jerusalem "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). Thus, besides fellowship, which would apply to all meetings and the whole life of the believers, we have here three special features which marked the church life of these saints: Teaching, Breaking of Bread, and Prayer. At first all their meetings were probably so characterized, but as the Church emerged from Judaism, we find regular meetings for special purposes. From Acts 20:6-7 we learn that a regular meeting was held on the first day of the week for the purpose of breaking bread. There we hear of a company, Paul and his companions, arriving at Troas and abiding there seven days. "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." Here at a specified time (the first day of the week, the Lord's day), at a specified place, the disciples came together for a specified purpose (to break bread). From the form of expression used here we are given to understand that this was their regular weekly custom. They did not come together to meet the apostle or to hear him preach, but to break bread on the first day of the week—the resurrection day, the day which spoke of His rising power. This was their habit and Paul and his company waited at Troas seven days so that they might enjoy the great privilege of breaking bread with the disciples. Being thus assembled for this purpose, Paul used the opportunity and followed with an address to the saints, for he was leaving on the morrow. But the first object of their meeting was to remember the Lord in His death; it was the center of their worship and a regular thing among them each Lord's day, the first day of the week. Thus we learn from Acts 2:1-47; Acts 20:1-38 that one of the principal meetings of the apostolic Churches was the meeting for the breaking of bread and worship in response to their Lord's request on the night of His betrayal. Further we learn that at first they met together every day at Jerusalem to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread and that later it seems to have been the custom in the Assemblies which were formed elsewhere to come together every first day of the week to celebrate the Lord's Supper. The Lord had said through Paul: "as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come" (1 Corinthians 11:26), so they did it often. These early Christians, in the bloom and freshness of their first love, were in the constant habit of breaking bread in affectionate remembrance of their Lord. They were so filled with the Holy Ghost, that Christ was ever before their hearts and they delighted to celebrate that precious feast which was, according to His own express word, the effecting memorial of Himself in His death.

Observe, it was not on the first Lord's day of the month or of the quarter of the year, but on the first day of the week that they gathered together for this holy purpose in obedience to their Lord and Savior's request. It was not occasionally that they broke bread, as is the custom of most Christians in our day, but regularly every Lord's day. So we should do, also, if we would follow the divine pattern given us in the Scriptures. These early Christians loved their Lord too well to neglect the precious memorial of His love which He had instituted on the night of His betrayal. From observing them, we may say that, just in proportion as saints love Christ, love His Word, and are filled with

the Holy Ghost, do they delight to go to His table and remember Him, shewing forth His death until He come. He Himself has said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

Purpose of the Supper

Having seen that the early Church came together regularly the first day of the week to break bread and that this gathering was the chief meeting of the Church (since it is the only one so distinctly specified) we go on to consider more definitely the meaning and purpose of the Lord's Supper. In the Gospels we have the Supper instituted, in the Acts we have it celebrated, as we have just seen, and in the first Epistle to the Corinthians we have it expounded. In the Gospel of Luke we read: "And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer . . . And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:14-20). The Lord was with His disciples for the last time before going to the cross where He was going to give Himself as a sacrifice for sin. There His body would be nailed to the cross and He would "bare our sins in his own body on the tree," as Peter afterwards expressed it. There He would drink the cup of God's wrath against sin and shed His blood as an atonement for sinners. On the ground of accomplished redemption, He would make a new covenant in His blood which was shed for all believers. He would then go to the Father and they would not have Him bodily with them any more.

Accordingly, after the Passover Supper, He instituted the new memorial feast of the Lord's Supper which would remind them, and believers down through the centuries, of what He had done for them at Calvary's cross. The bread was emblematical of the body in which He suffered and completed the work of atonement and the cup would remind us of His blood which was shed on the cross for our sins. It was not, as some erroneously think and teach, that in the Supper the bread becomes literally His body and the contents of the cup become literally His blood, so that we actually eat His body and drink His blood as something which makes us more fit for heaven and gives us' the forgiveness of sins. The Lord was still bodily present with them when He instituted the Supper and surely He did not mean that, though He was bodily present, the bread and the cup He then gave them was also literally His body and His blood. No, He was thinking of the time when He would no longer be bodily present with them; thus He gave them, and believers throughout the Church age, the emblems of the bread and the cup which would recall Himself and His death on the cross vividly to their minds. When the Lord said, "This is my body," and "this is my blood," he used a figure of speech, as He often did, just as we do in showing a picture of a loved one, saying, "This is my mother," etc. We mean thereby that the picture is a likeness of our loved one, a representation, and no thought of literalness is implied by the words. Yet many have strained at the like expression of our Lord "This is my body"-and insist that the emblems of the Lord's Supper become, at the words of the priest or minister, literally His body and His blood to the participant.

What, then, is the purpose and object of the Lord's Supper? "This do in remembrance of me," are His own blessed words. He knew well the tendency of our hearts to slip away from Him and from each other, so He gave us this memorial feast of Himself in His death for us, that we might be reminded often of His great love towards us and of the wonderful redemption which He has accomplished in our behalf. He would have us raise a memorial to His death here in this world that

would not have Him, a memorial not in marble or costly architecture, but by a simple act of remembrance. "This do ye" (1 Corinthians 11:25), He says. This act of obedience He claims on our part. Dear Christian reader, are you doing it? To those who respond to His loving request to remember Him in His appointed way, the assurance is given: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew (announce, or tell thoroughly-Greek), the Lord's death till He come" (1 Corinthians 11:26). This is what our simple act of remembering Him in eating the bread and drinking the cup means. It is the proclaiming of His precious death as the only ground of salvation. The word here translated "shew" is translated elsewhere "to preach" ten times in our King James version. So whenever believers come together to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread, they thereby preach the glorious fact of Christ's death for sinners and salvation through His shed blood. How wonderful! So important is the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, that a special revelation about it was given to the apostle Paul from the Lord in glory. This revelation is recorded in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 11:23-29. Here the purpose of the Supper is clearly set forth and the manner in which it should be observed.

Manner of Observance From this Epistle to the Corinthians we learn that a bad state of affairs existed in the Corinthian Assembly and much disorder had come in among them with regard to many things, among them the Lord's Supper. From 1 Corinthians 11:1-34 we see that they had been coming together in a careless way and had not been eating the Lord's Supper in a true sense. The apostle had to write them: "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken" 1 Corinthians 11:20-21).

It would seem that they were mixing up the love-feast (a common meal which the early Christians partook of together) with the Lord's Supper and were thus eating the Supper in an unworthy and irreverent manner so that the real character of the Supper of the Lord was lost sight of. They had even degraded the character of the love-feast by holding to class distinctions, the rich feasting on their abundance while the poor went hungry because they had little to bring to the meal. So the apostle Paul was directed by God's Spirit to write this Epistle to them correcting these various disorders. In this eleventh chapter we have special instructions as to the purpose of the Lord's Supper and the holy and reverent manner in which it should be observed. Since this Epistle to the Corinthians was meant of God to be part of the Holy Scriptures, we see that God in His wisdom allowed these disorders to come up in the early Church so that through this Epistle we might have permanent, divine instructions for dealing with such conditions and know His mind and order more fully. Thereby we see that God not only meant Paul to express the divine mind about these things for the benefit of the Corinthians, but for the guidance and instruction of the whole Church throughout the dispensation. How thankful we should be for this. From 1 Corinthians 11:23 we learn that a special revelation was given to the apostle Paul about the Supper of the Lord. "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." Paul was not one of the twelve apostles who were with the Lord on the night when He instituted this remembrance feast, so these instructions about the Supper were communicated personally to Him by the Lord Himself. It was not now merely the lowly Jesus at the Passover Supper who spoke, but the Lord on the throne of glory in heaven who gave to Paul these details as to the mind of God about the breaking of bread. Surely this fact should show us the great importance of the Lord's Supper as a Christian institution. The whole matter of the Supper, its institution by the Lord on the night of His betrayal, its divine

purpose as an act of remembrance, and the manner in which we are to partake of it, is therefore of great importance since the Lord made it the subject of a special revelation. We should notice the oft recurrence of the title of the Master as Lord in this chapter about the Supper. He speaks of the Lord's Supper, the Lord Jesus, the Lord's death, the cup of the Lord, the body and blood of the Lord, the body of the Lord, and chastening of the Lord. The reason for this is easy to see. The Corinthians must have forgotten that He was the Lord or they would not have gotten into this terrible disorder with regard to the Lord's Supper. The One of whom the Supper speaks has been made Lord of all and He has the right of full control and command over everything which we have and are. We are responsible to Him for what we do, what we say, and what we think, and especially so when we remember Him in His death. They had forgotten Him in this respect and had made the Supper their own supper. They were occupied with their own things and lost sight of the things of the Lord. They had forgotten the Lord's presence and thus had lost the true value of the Lord's Supper. This is bound to follow when His presence is not realized. They had fallen so far as to degrade the Lord's Supper to the level of a common meal. It was needful that they be brought back to the realization of the Lordship of Christ and of the sacred character of the Supper of the Lord.

Therefore Paul was led to write them urgently and solemnly that he might win back their hearts to a true remembrance of Christ in the breaking of bread. Such was the condition and error into which the Corinthians had fallen and we need to realize that we ourselves are constantly in danger of falling into a similar state of carelessness and disorder as to the manner and way in which we partake of the sacred Supper of the Lord. It is of the utmost importance that we realize the presence of the Lord Jesus and center our thoughts and affections upon Him when we are gathered together to remember Him in His death. There is ever a continual effort of Satan to draw away our thoughts from the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and to fill our minds with matters not appropriate to the Lord's Supper and the Lord's Table. Therefore continual effort, watchfulness, and prayer to the Lord are needed that our hearts and thoughts may be concentrated upon our Lord and Savior in remembrance and worship. His adorable and wondrous Person and His great work of redemption are the objects before us in the Supper and as we fix our gaze upon Him wandering thoughts will be collected and restless spirits will be subdued. His presence will then be realized and the Supper of the Lord will be observed in a manner pleasing to Himself. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 of 1 Corinthians 11:1-34 the apostle brings before them afresh the words of the Lord spoken at the institution of the Supper and in 1 Corinthians 11:26 he adds that as often as they partook of it they skewed the Lord's death till He come. Let us take special note of those blessed words: "till He come." We are to continue remembering the Lord in the Supper each Lord's day, or first day of the week, until His coming again in the air for His Church. Thus the breaking of bread takes us backward to the death of our Savior, upward to the glory where He now is, and onward to the blessed moment of His coming for us. (We might add here that the fact of His birth into this world as man may also come before us in connection with the emblems of the Supper, for then it was that He took upon Him a body of flesh and blood. Thus His birth, death, resurrection, glorification, and coming again are all necessarily brought to our remembrance each time we truly eat the bread and drink the cup of the Supper. Therefore we do not need each year a special day of commemoration for His birth, another for His death, and another for His resurrection. Nothing is said about such days in the Scriptures, but each first day of the week He would have us remember Himself in His birth, death, resurrection, glorification, and

coming again.)

We come now to the solemn words of the apostle as to eating and drinking the Supper unworthily. "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation (judgment-original) to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

If we bear in mind what has already been before us about the disorder amongst the Corinthians as to the Lord's Supper, it will help us to see that the eating and drinking unworthily which the apostle speaks of here, does not refer to the worthiness or otherwise of the persons, but to the unworthy manner in which they had been eating the Lord's Supper. If eating the Supper depended upon personal worthiness, no one on earth could partake, for no one is worthy in himself to partake of the Lord's Supper. We are only worthy in the sense that Christ has taken us in our lost condition, cleansed us by His blood, and thereby fitted us for His presence and given us the right to partake of the Supper. This right is the result of what He has done for us and not of any personal worthiness. The apostle is not speaking of individual worthiness at all, but of the manner in which these saints conducted themselves when together. They were very careless and ignored what the bread meant and what the cup meant. They forgot the solemn realities that were expressed by the emblems, and partook of them as common, meaning less things. They did not discern in the bread the Lord's body and thus ate and drank unworthily and brought present judgment upon themselves. The same danger remains for us today. We may carelessly partake of the Lord's Supper, not thinking of His body and His blood as we eat the bread and drink of the cup. Our thoughts may be of other things and not of the Lord whom we profess to remember. If we do not discern by faith His body, we eat unworthily and are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord since we treat their memorials with indifference. This is a solemn thought. It is not, as we have said before, that the bread becomes His body and the contents of the cup become His blood, but to faith they speak definitely of the broken body of Christ and of His shed blood. The question is: Are we really discerning by faith the Lord's body in the breaking of bread? Do we sometimes eat and drink of the Supper as an ordinary meal, or a common thing without reflection or self-judgment? Do we fail to realize His presence or fail to perceive that in the bread and the cup the Spirit would bring to our view His body which was given for us and His blood which was shed for us? If so, we are eating and drinking unworthily; we are eating and drinking judgment to ourselves and will bring down upon us the chastening hand of the Lord.

"For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:30-32). Such are the serious consequences of eating and drinking the Lord's Supper unworthily. Since partaking of the Lord's Supper is a solemn matter, and since there is the possibility of eating and drinking in an unworthy manner with such serious consequences, one might tremble and shrink back from obeying the Savior's last request, "This do in remembrance of me." To do so would be to fall into another error and be disobedient to the Lord's command of love. In this respect 1 Corinthians 11:28 and 1 Corinthians 11:31 are an encouragement to us which we must not overlook. "But let a man examine (prove original) himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup . . . For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."

While holiness and reverence are stressed on the one hand, grace encourages and strengthens us on the other hand to come and eat of the Supper with self-judgment, carefulness, and sobriety. Though the Lord urges that we put ourselves to the proof, examining and trying our ways and practicing habitual self-judgment upon ourselves, He invites all His own to come and eat of the bread and drink of the cup, but not with a careless or light spirit. Notice, it does not say, "Let a man examine himself, and stay away," but "let a man examine himself, and so let him eat." As an examined and self-judged one, we are invited to come and eat and drink of the Supper. Thus does grace strengthen the one who tries himself with uprightness of heart and judges himself; and this emboldens him to come to the Supper with a good conscience. Where there is lightness and no self-judgment, on the other hand, the Lord will show Himself there to judge and chasten, so that sickness, and in extreme cases even death, may be the result (1 Corinthians 11:30).

Thus we see that what will preserve us from an unworthy participation in the Lord's Supper and from eating and drinking judgment to ourselves is the holy exercise of self-judgment as a deep, earnest, and habitual thing. This is most necessary and very important for a happy Christian life. Self-judgment is an invaluable and indispensable exercise. Were it more faithfully and habitually practiced our daily walk would be much different. If self were continually judged in the presence of God we would not be required to judge our ways, words, and actions, for the flesh would be subdued and the root judged so that evil fruit would not appear. Thus there would be no need for the Lord to judge us either. Having pointed out that the eating and drinking unworthily refers primarily to our conduct and manner of partaking at the Lord's Table we must add a word about our conduct and walk during the week. Let no one suppose that since we have spoken so much about our attitude of heart while at the Lord's Table, remembering Him, it does not then matter how we go on during the week and that this has nothing to do with the matter of partaking of the Lord's Supper unworthily.

What we are during the week we will be while at the Lords Table. What our heart has been occupied with throughout the past six days it will also be occupied with on the first day of the week while at His Table. If we have been careless and indifferent toward the Lord during the week we are bound to be careless and indifferent toward Him while at His Table and to fail to discern His body and His blood in the true sense in the emblems of the Supper. Thus we will eat and drink judgment to ourselves. It is impossible to have our hearts in a worldly- atmosphere all week and then to be entirely detached from it when seeking to remember Him on Lord's Day. If one lives during the week in folly, vanity, pleasure, and worldliness, attends- movies, concerts, processions, musical parties, athletic games, etc., can there be the discernment of the Lord's body in the breaking of bread on the first day of the week? Surely not. In connection with such gross worldliness and in subjection to the Lord, how can there be any spiritual communion with the body and blood of the Savior? Such may go through the outward act of "breaking bread," but it is to be greatly feared that they know practically nothing of the inward power and reality of eating, by faith, the body and blood of Christ (see John 6:55-56), and thus must be guilty of not discerning the Lord's body and thereby eating and drinking judgment to themselves when partaking of His Supper. May the Spirit of God give us deep searching of heart and cultivate in us the spirit of true and habitual self-judgment, so that we may remember our blessed Lord in all sincerity and in a truly worthy manner.

Expression of Fellowship

We have considered the Lord's Supper in its primary aspect of a remembrance feast, setting before us, symbolically, the body and blood of Christ as it is presented to us in 1 Corinthians 11:1-34. There is, however, another aspect of truth, subsidiary to this central feature of remembrance, which is set forth in the Lord's Supper, often overlooked by many. This is given us in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 : "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."

Here we have the collective act of breaking of bread spoken of: "The cup of blessing which we bless," and "the bread which we break." In 1 Corinthians 11:1-34 each individual does the eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup as unto the Lord, and is responsible to do it in a worthy manner. Thus the expressions there are "ye eat ... and ye drink," and "let a man examine himself." But in these verses of 1 Corinthians 10:1-33 the corporate aspect of taking the Lord's Supper together is the important truth emphasized. As we remember the Lord together, partaking of the same bread and cup, we thereby express fellowship with each other and with the table from which we partake. Thus the thought of communion or fellowship in the breaking of bread is also to be thought of. This is the leading thought in the portion before us. Therefore this is the reason why the cup is spoken of first, for the atonement by the shed blood of Christ is the basis of our communion and fellowship with God and with fellow-believers. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ," or "fellowship with the blood of Christ," as it may also be translated. As we give thanks for this cup and partake of it together we thereby express our fellowship with the blood of Christ, and in so much as we really lay hold of this truth we enter into His thoughts about it, have part therein, and enjoy that which He has purchased for us by His blood.

Then the apostle goes on to say: "The bread which we break, it is not (the) communion of the body of the Christ? Because we, (being) many, are one loaf, one body; for we all partake of that one loaf" (New Trans.). Thus the bread here has another significance besides that of the Lord's body given for us. We learn that the one loaf which we all partake of in the Supper is also a figure of His spiritual Body now on earth, "the church, which is His body" (Ephesians 1:22-23). It speaks of the invisible unity of the mystical Body of Christ "one loaf, one body." And as members of that one spiritual body of believers we partake together of the Lord's Supper in the Assembly thereby expressing our fellowship one with another. This is the "communion of the body of Christ" and the practical manifestation of the truth that "we (being) many, are one loaf, one body . . . all partakers of that one loaf." In the act of breaking of bread we give a definite exhibition of our oneness as "members one of another" in Christ. There is thus no thought of division expressed in the appointed emblems of the Supper nor is there any room for such a thought. They show forth that imperishable and unbreakable unity of the Body of Christ which remains true in spite of the multiplied divisions existing in the professing Church. The practice of some of cutting the bread for communion into pieces or using wafers and individual cups is quite out of harmony with the emblem of the one loaf and the cup of 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 and with the truth of the one body of believers. This practice is therefore quite unscriptural. Since the Scriptural ground of gathering together is that of owning only the one body of all believers, only the emblem of one loaf will agree with this. And it is "the cup which we bless," not cups, though more than one cup may be needed in large gatherings for distribution. Who May Partake?

Since the loaf of the Lord's Supper speaks also of the one body of all believers and since our partaking of it together is an expression of our unity and fellowship with each other, the question of who may rightly partake of the Supper should be easily answered. It is only for those who are known and proven members of that body. Only those who know the Lord as their Savior and truly believe on His atoning death for their salvation have a right to His Supper and Table. The Lord's Supper is only for the family of the redeemed, and if one claims to be a child of God that one must prove by his walk that he is truly such, otherwise the confession is but an empty profession. All who are known to be true believers and are walking as such in separation from evil, and are not excluded by Scriptural discipline, are privileged to partake of the Supper in God's Assembly. "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (Romans 15:7). If unsaved persons or those whose profession is doubtful be allowed to take the Lord's Supper with true believers, what expression of true unity and fellowship can there be in the breaking of bread? Surely none. If we partake of the Lord's Supper with any who are unconverted, we cannot say as Paul says, "We being many are one bread and one body," for some in the circle do not belong to that body. When speaking with Christians on this point, an answer often received is: "I take the Lord's Supper for myself, others do not concern me. If some partake who have no right to, they eat to their own condemnation; that's not my responsibility." Such an attitude surely indicates that the truth of 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 is not known or understood. The Lord does not invite us to the Supper to eat and drink every one for himself. No, each child of God is invited to come and partake in fellowship with other believers and there is corporate enjoyment and corporate responsibility as well. No Open Communion

We cannot leave the Lord's Supper open to anyone who wants to partake thereof, that is, the question of partaking or not is never to be decided by the individual only. In 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 the apostle Paul presses upon the Corinthian Assembly their responsibility to purge out the leaven that had come into their midst, and that they were responsible to judge those that were within, that is, those in the circle of expressed fellowship at the Lord's Table. He charges them to "put away from among yourselves that wicked person." Here we see that the Assembly is responsible to maintain the holiness of the Lord's Table and of His Supper. If they must put the evil out of their midst they surely were responsible to watch and see that no evil was allowed to come into the Assembly or to the Lord's Table. From 1 Corinthians 5:12-13 we see that there are those who are "within" and those who are "without" the circle of fellowship at the Lord's Supper. All this can only mean that there must be care and oversight exercised as to those who partake of the Supper and an understanding as to who is within and who is without. Persons must be examined and proven as to their confession and walk if the holiness of the Lord's Table is to be maintained and a true expression of unity and fellowship is to be given forth in the breaking of bread. In Israel there were porters who watched at the gates and kept the doors of God's house (see 1 Chronicles 9:17-27 and Nehemiah 7:1-3). Their duty was to let in such as should come in and to refuse admittance to those who should be kept out. So today in the Assembly of God the work of porters is most necessary to keep the Assembly from defilement by the entrance of the unconverted and the unclean. Not that there is to be the formal office of porters in the Assembly, but that this godly care is exercised as to those who are admitted into the bosom of the Assembly and to the holy privilege of partaking of the Lord's Supper. Would it not be proper and Scriptural to say that the communion of believers at the Lord's Table is not to be an open communion, nor a closed communion, but a guarded communion? It is not to be open to just anybody, nor closed to any who do not belong to

"us," so to say-a sectarian communion, but it is for all those who are known believers and walking in truth and holiness. Since the only Scriptural ground of gathering is the practical owning of the truth of the one body of all believers (which is also symbolized by the one loaf of the Supper) we must receive to the Lord's Table every proven member of that body whom Scriptural discipline does not shut out; otherwise we act inconsistently with the ground which we profess to occupy and we become a sect. In our day of increased ruin, widespread divisions, and multiplied evils in the professing Church, it, of course, becomes more and more difficult to fully carry out this principle and yet to walk in separation from non-scriptural associations, but the truth of the one body ever abides for us to act upon. We believe the following lines of C. H. Mackintosh are worthy of consideration on the subject: "The celebration of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper should be the distinct expression of the unity of ALL believers, and not merely of the unity of a certain number gathered on certain principles, which distinguishes them from others. If there be any term of communion proposed save the all-important one of faith in the atonement of Christ and a walk consistent with that faith, the table becomes the table of a sect, and possesses no claims upon the hearts of the faithful." Thus in receiving to the Lord's Table we must avoid looseness and carelessness on the one hand and sectarianism on the other hand.

There are, of course, other angles of the question and other truths that enter into the matter, which we shall shortly consider in connection with the Lord's Table. Acts 9:26-29 gives us an example of carefulness in receiving into the Assembly and shows us that persons are not to be received on their own testimony merely. Here we find the newly converted Saul seeking to join himself to the disciples at Jerusalem, but they were afraid of him and believed not that he was a disciple. Then Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and testified as to his conversion and how he had boldly preached in the name of Jesus. Upon Barnabas' testimony as to the genuineness of Saul's conversion, he was received into the Assembly and went in and out among them. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1). This is ever an important principle for us to act upon. In Romans 16:1-2 and 2 Corinthians 3:1 we read of letters of commendation for believers going from one Assembly to another who are not known in the place they visit. This is godly order and also shows carefulness in receiving to the breaking of bread at the Lord's Table. The Lord's Table

We have learned that 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 speaks of that phase of the breaking of bread which is the expression of the fellowship of the members of the Body of Christ and that the one loaf is also spoken of as a figure of the spiritual body. In this same chapter we find the only occurrence in the New Testament of the expression "the Lord's Table" which expression we have used a number of times. We purpose now to consider this phrase and to inquire what is implied by and associated with this term. The bread on the table is the symbol of the Lord's body, but since the literal body is the figure also of the spiritual body, the one loaf is taken also in this passage as the figure of the one Body of Christ composed of all believers: "For we being many are one bread, one body" (1 Corinthians 10:17, New Trans.). So we see in this passage that the Holy Spirit associates the term, "the Lord's Table," with the one body and our fellowship together as members of that body. We may say the Lord's Supper and the Lord's Table are synonymous in one sense and yet in another sense they have distinct aspects as they present two phases or aspects of the truth associated with the breaking of bread. The Supper is associated with the individual remembrance of the death of the Lord, while the term, "the Lord's Table" is associated rather with that phase of

the Lord's Supper where a public expression is given to the oneness of Christ's body and of our fellowship together as such. The Table speaks of the visible expression of fellowship of the one body. The ground of fellowship which God has for us is that of the one body of all believers, and this is founded upon the redemption by Christ's blood. Positionally all believers are at the Lord's Table in the sense that they are in the fellowship of the Body of Christ. In the breaking of bread together, we manifest a practical expression of this fellowship. The term "the Lord's Table" is a typical one and is not to be understood in a literal sense. It does not mean a piece of furniture upon which the bread and the cup are standing, but the principle or ground upon which the Supper is celebrated. The ground taken in the breaking of bread determines the character of the table spread upon it. The Table of the Lord is expressive of fellowship with Him and with the members of His Body and there His authority and His rights must be owned and the holiness of His name maintained. If other ground is taken than that of the practical owning of the unity of the Body of Christ which God has marked out for us, the table spread upon such a ground does not bear the true characteristic of the Lord's Table. Tables maintained on denominational or independent lines necessarily cannot be on the ground of the unity of the Body of Christ and hence do not answer to the characteristic of the Lord's Table in 1 Corinthians 10:1-33. Wherever the principles of the unity of the Body of Christ are not recognized in practice and a man-made ground of fellowship is adopted instead, there is no exhibition of the truth of the Lord's Table and hence such tables cannot be Scripturally owned as the Table of the Lord.

They are really the tables of parties on man-made grounds of fellowship. The Lord's Supper may be celebrated there with reverence and thankful love by sincere Christians ignorant of the truth connected with the Lord's Table, but there is not the manifestation of the oneness of the Body of Christ and consequently the truth of the Lord's Table is not realized or enjoyed because principles subversive to the fellowship of His Table are held. Another important feature that must be manifested if a table is to be owned as the Lord's Table is holiness and truth, for this is the very character of Him whose table it is professed to be. ("He that is holy, he that is true"- Revelation 3:7; "Be ye holy; for I am holy"- 1 Peter 1:16) .If for instance, any unsound and unscriptural teachings affecting the person of Christ are admitted or retained in a gathering, or if persons who hold and teach them are received by the gathering, the very person of the Lord of the Table is attacked and holiness and truth violated. How then can such a table be owned as the Lord's Table? Likewise, if moral evil is allowed in the fellowship at the Table, it cannot be owned as the Table of the holy and true One. So we see, then, that the holiness of the Lord's Table must be maintained as well as the oneness of the Body of Christ. The purity of God's truth must never be sacrificed in order to maintain unity at His Table, nor will true unity ever be interfered with by the strictest maintenance of truth and holiness. But all must be done in a spirit of grace, meekness, and lowliness as otherwise the Lord's character of grace would be distorted. Now let us look at verses 18 to 21 of 1 Corinthians 10:1-33, where we have the principle of fellowship applied to eating at the altar. We have already seen that the thought of fellowship is the prominent truth connected with the Lord's Table. After speaking of partaking of the Lord's Supper in verses 16 and 17, the apostle says: "See Israel according to flesh: are not they who eat the sacrifices in communion with the altar?" (New Trans.). Here is an important principle for us. To eat at an altar or table is expressive of communion and fellowship with that altar or table as well as with those at that altar. To sit at a table and eat denotes identification with that table and with what it stands for. The apostle goes on to speak of the altars of the heathen and says: "what (the nations) sacrifice

they sacrifice to demons, and not to God. Now I do not wish you to be in communion with demons" (New Trans.). Behind the heathen idol was a demon and the heathen, without realizing it, brought their offerings to these demons. Therefore it was the table of demons and for a Christian to even sit in an idol-house and participate in a heathen meal connected with their offerings, as some of the Corinthians thought they had liberty to do, would be to ally oneself with the table of demons and to be in communion with them. So verse 21 says, "Ye cannot drink (the) Lord's cup and (the) cup of demons: ye cannot partake of (the) Lord's table and of (the) table of demons" (New Trans.). It is impossible to drink the cup of the Lord, acquiescing in all that it stands for, and then to drink of the cup of demons also. To do so would be to associate the Lord's Table with the table of demons and to deny the fellowship of the Lord. Thus the apostle showed the Corinthians how serious a matter any connection with the heathen altar would be. This was a danger confronting the Corinthians at the time Paul wrote to them, This danger of association with the table of demons does not exist for us today, generally speaking, but the principle which Paul applied in the matter still remains for us to apply to present conditions. That principle is that the act of eating at a table is expressive of identification and fellowship with that table and with what it stands for and with all who likewise partake. We are not surrounded by tables of demons as the Corinthians were, but there are many tables of religious parties and sects about us and the danger is that we are liable to associate the Lord's Table with principles which contradict the fellowship of His Table and which overlook or even deny the sole authority of the Lord over His Table. In a word, the point for us to realize is that wherever we take the Lord's Supper, we thereby express communion with the table in that place and identify ourselves with the ground and principles upon which that table is spread. If one who is breaking bread with those who meet on the ground of the unity of the Body of Christ and who seek to give practical expression to the truth of the Lord's Table were to visit another gathering meeting on denominational or independent ground and break bread with them and then return to the fellowship of the Lord's Table, or vice versa, he would thereby act inconsistently by associating the Lord's Table with contradictory principles. To do so is clearly wrong, though it may be done in ignorance and calls for instruction in the truth. Communion with the Table, then, is also expressed in the breaking of bread and these important considerations of fellowship which we have discussed are associated with it. Thus there is more to the breaking of bread than the average Christian realizes. To sum it all up, it would, therefore, be well for each one to ask (1) Whom am I remembering in the Supper? (2) Am I remembering Him in a worthy manner? (3) With whom am I remembering Him? and (4) On what ground and principles am I remembering Him? In closing our meditations upon the Lord's Table we would say that amidst the ruin and universal failure and division of the Church in which we find ourselves, it certainly does not become any group of Christians to make high claims as to exclusive possession of the Lord's Table. Our endeavor and concern should rather be that of ever seeking to give practical expression to the truths of which the Lord's Table is symbolical and to be true to the fellowship of His Table. The Lord has His Table and He will take care of it. He has not given it to any one particular company of Christians, but gives all believers the privilege of being at His Table, with the attendant responsibility of behaving accordingly. When the question is asked, "WHERE IS THIS TABLE OF THE LORD?" we reply with the weighty words of another: "There where they, be they but two or three, are gathered together without having any other gathering center but the Lord Jesus alone; there where they do not link up the Holy Name, which constitutes their bond of unity, with any iniquity, and the discipline which becomes the house of God is maintained; there where they guard

themselves from every principle of independence (which would rob the Lord of His authority), and submit themselves one to another in the fear of God without party spirit or controversy, while, at the same time, all the redeemed are embraced as forming the one body in the Spirit, and all endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, happy to welcome at the Lord's Table all those that are begotten of God under only one condition that they be sound in walk and doctrine. There where there are such Christians they have, in spite of all the common ruin and all the imperfections that may adhere to their testimony, the Lord's Table in their midst; that is, they realize gathered around the Lord Jesus, as they collectively celebrate the Lord's Supper, that they are one bread, and one body with all the beloved of the Lord throughout the whole world." (Translated from the German).

Worship In speaking of the meetings of the Assembly. we have associated the breaking of bread and worship together as one specific Assembly meeting, for truly the remembrance of the Lord in His death for us definitely leads our souls to thanksgiving and worship . The Lord's Supper is distinctly a feast of Thanksgiving. The Lord Himself, at the institution of it, gave it this distinct character by giving thanks. "He took bread, and give thanks., Praise, thanksgiving, and worship, and not prayer requests, are the suited utterances at the Table of the Lord. So Paul also speaks of the cup of the Supper as ,The cup of blessing which we bless" (1 Corinthians 10:16) It is a cup of thanksgiving and a feast Of joy and gladness, and it leads our hearts to "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks toHis name" (Hebrews 13:15). The Lord's Supper and worship are thus surely linked together. The Supper is the witness of His love unto death and of His finished work for us, by virtue of which such sinners as we were can draw near to worship.

If we follow the example of the early Church in coming together each first day of the week for the breaking of bread, we will surely make the remembrance Supper the center. of the worship meeting. Such a gathering together is the great occasion for church worship. Praise should always flow from our hearts to the Lord, but the special occasion for praise and worship is when we are gathered together with the memorials of our Savior's dying love before us. Then the Spirit of God truly leads us out in fervent praise and worship. But just what is worship? we might well inquire. It is necessary to be clear as to this, for in the common acceptance of the word, "public worship" includes prayer, praise, and preaching for the edification of saints or the conversion of sinners. A moment's reflection will surely be sufficient to show that this is quite incorrect. Even prayer, as blessed as it is, is not worship, for that is asking of God for our needs. And no work of God towards men is worship. Preaching the Gospel to the unconverted is not worship, though it may be the means of producing it in a heart; neither is a sermon worship, though it, likewise, may be the means of leading the heart out in worship. As another has well said: "True worship is but the grateful and joyful response of the heart to God, when filled with the deep sense of the blessings which have been communicated from on high ... It is the honour and adoration which are rendered to God, by reason of what He is in Himself, and what He is for those who render it. Worship is the employment of heaven, and a blessed and precious privilege for us upon earth . . . Worship is a homage rendered in common, whether by angels or by men ... Praises and thanksgivings, and the making mention of the attributes of God and of His acts, whether of power or in grace, in the attitude of adoration, constitute that which is properly speaking worship. In it we draw near to God, and address ourselves to Him" (J. N. Darby).

This, indeed, is what true worship is. The meaning of the Greek word for worship (proskun), which is used in most of the New Testament, is: "to do reverence or homage by prostration-to bow one's self in adoration."

We might now ask what is the basis of Christian worship? This we shall find in John 4:1-54 where we have the conversation of the Lord- with the Samaritan woman. In this chapter we have perhaps the most important word on Christian worship in this dispensation of grace. There the Lord spoke of the true worshippers who worship the Father in spirit and in truth. But first He said to her: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" (John 4:10) . In this wonderful verse, we have set forth by the Lord the necessary basis of Christian worship. The whole Trinity is therein concerned in one way or another. God revealed in grace as the great Giver is the first thought, the source of all; then we have the Person of the Son present in humiliation among men on earth; lastly the Son gives to needy, thirsty souls the living water-the Holy Ghost.

All this is necessary for the true character and object of Christian worship. God must be known as manifested in the cross in holiness and grace and the Son must be known as the One who has come down to man in grace and love to die for sinners. It also implies that the heart has been awakened to its real wants and has asked of the Lord and received from Him living water, the Holy Ghost, as a well of refreshment within. This means that one must be born of God, have accepted Christ as Savior, and be indwelt by the Holy Ghost in order to worship as a Christian. The natural, unregenerate man is incapable of worshipping God; there is no capacity in him to worship God, for He must be worshipped in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Only those who are washed in the blood of Christ and who have received the Spirit can draw near and enter into the presence of God to adore and worship Him. No one can dare to present himself before God who has not the assurance of sins forgiven.

It is the Holy Spirit who gives the believer the full assurance of the efficacy of the work of Christ in our behalf and of our acceptance before God in Him. By the Spirit the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts and by that same Spirit we are able to call God our Father, to draw nigh to His presence in the holiest of all as His redeemed children, and to worship the Father without fear or trembling (Ephesians 1:3-7, Romans 5:5, Galatians 4:6, Hebrews 10:19-22) . The Holy Spirit is the originator in us of all the thoughts, affections, and feelings of love and praise which arise in our hearts in response to the love of the Father and the Son. He is the power for Christian worship, therefore, no one is able to render such to God who is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Having considered the basis of Christian worship, we may now speak of the character of Christian worship. Returning to John 4:1-54, we read of the Lord telling the Samaritan woman: "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). How true this is of many today who claim to worship God-"Ye worship ye know not what." For true worship there must be intelligence of God and of His salvation as revealed in Christ Jesus. "We know what we worship." This is one of the first characteristics of Christian worship; there is intelligence and definite knowledge of the One who is worshipped. The Lord continued to tell the Samaritan woman: "the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24).

Here is the full and distinctive character of Christian worship. God is made known as a Father seeking and adapting children to worship Himself. It is an entirely new character of worship in direct contrast to the old worship of Judaism that left the worshipper far off from God in fear and trembling. The Father is going out in His own love in quest of worshippers, seeking them under the gentle name of "Father," and placing them in a position of nearness and freedom before Him as the children of His love. He accomplishes this by the Son and in the energy of the Holy Spirit.

God is known in this age of grace by His children under the tender and loving character of Father and worshipped as such. This is the portion of the feeblest Christian and every child of God is perfectly competent for worship of the Father in spirit and in truth. It is the only begotten Son, who dwells in the bosom of the Father, who reveals the Father unto us as He Himself has known Him. The Holy Ghost sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts and we worship and adore our Father as revealed to us by the Son and according to the power and affections which the Holy Spirit inspires within us.

Another feature of Christian worship follows. God must be worshipped in "spirit and in truth," for He is a Spirit. "To worship in spirit is to worship according to the true nature of God, and in the power of that communion which the Spirit of God gives. Spiritual worship is thus in contrast with the forms and ceremonies, and all the religiousness of which the flesh is capable. To worship 'in truth' is to worship Him according to the revelation which He has given of Himself" (J. N. Darby). As God is a Spirit, spiritual worship is all He accepts. His worshippers "must worship in spirit and in truth." It is a moral necessity flowing from His nature. This qualification He has most fully provided for us, as the new life we enjoy is by the Spirit and is spirit, not flesh. We live by the Spirit; we walk by the Spirit and we "worship by (the) Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh" (Php 3:3 New Trans.). Thus Christian worship is the expression of the new inward life in the energy and power of the Holy Spirit. This sets aside all human formulas, imposing ceremonies, and rituals, for worship in spirit and in truth precludes all this. It is the flesh and human will that produces such things, and the energy of the flesh can have no place in the worship of God.

Let us now consider the Christian's place of worship. This the Epistle to the Hebrews clearly marks out for us. In Hebrews 10:19-22 we read: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near," etc. Here we see that the blood of Jesus, the rent veil, and the High Priest over the house of God give us boldness to enter into the holiest-the holy of holies, to render our worship. Our place of worship, therefore, is in the immediate presence of God where He sits on His throne. Into this presence He has in wondrous grace given us a title to enter for worship at all times through the precious blood of Jesus. This is our sanctuary where we draw near one with another as we meet together around the Lord to worship and praise.

We should say also that the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, is equally with the Father the object of worship, for "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which sent Him" (John 5:23). The following words of another give us a good picture of Christian worship: "In brief, we might say that Christian worship has its source in an accomplished redemption; its object is God the Father and the Son; its place, the presence of God; its power, the Holy Spirit; its material, the truths fully revealed in the Word of

God; and its duration, eternity" (S. Ridout).

It may be necessary to here reaffirm what has been previously mentioned, namely, that all believers are priests and have equal privileges and access to God to "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5; 1 Peter 2:9). For true worship, then, we must come together simply as believers, realizing that we are all priests able to offer up worship, and the Spirit of God must be left free to use whomsoever He will to speak the praises of the gathered assembly. He may use one or six or twelve to express the praises suitable to His mind. In 1 Corinthians 14:15-19; 1 Corinthians 14:24 we have a full expression of God's intended will for Assembly worship and gatherings. There we read of praying with the spirit and the understanding, singing with the spirit and with the understanding, blessing with the spirit, giving of thanks, and of prophesying and speaking in the Church. Such were the activities in which the Holy Spirit led the early Christians when they were gathered together. And thus He would lead us today and cause us to "praise the name of God with a song" and to "magnify him with thanksgiving" (Psalms 69:30).

It should be observed that neither here, in this inspired description of the coming together of a Christian company (1 Corinthians 14:1-40), nor anywhere else in the book of Acts or in the Epistles do we read of playing an instrument as part of the worship service.

Instrumental music is out of place at such a gathering and contrary to the spirit and character of the Assembly so gathered. The object before us at such a time is not the pleasing of our senses, our fallen nature, or the gratifying of the outsider with pleasing sounds, but the presenting to God of what suits Him—that with which He has filled our hearts by the Holy Spirit. That which is acceptable and pleasing to God is "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19), "singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). After all, no instrument can equal in effect the human voice; so said Haydn a famous composer. With Israel, an earthly people, we find instrumental music in place, but the Church is a heavenly body and all is to be by the Holy Spirit. It should hardly be necessary to add that reverence should certainly accompany a true spirit of worship. Since we enter into the holiest of all, our souls should be filled with such reverence and godly fear as becomes the presence of God. If we consider the examples given of worshippers in the Scriptures, we find that saints of every age were careful to express reverence before God even in the posture of body which they assumed in worship and prayer. Abraham fell on his face before the Lord (Genesis 17:3); Moses bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped (Exodus 34:8); the Levites called the people to, "Stand up and bless the Lord your God" (Nehemiah 9:5). The wise men fell down and worshipped the Child Jesus and the leper who was healed fell down at Jesus' feet (Matthew 2:11; Luke 17:16). To assume positions of bodily ease and indifference during praise or prayer (when physical infirmities do not hinder), certainly does not express reverence before the Lord.

We would also call attention to the fact that the sacrifice of giving is connected with the offering of the sacrifice of praise in Hebrews 13:15-16. "With such sacrifices (spiritual and material) God is well pleased." So also in Deuteronomy 26:1-19 we find that the giving of tithes is mentioned in connection with the bringing of the basket of first fruits to the Lord in worship. And since the apostle tells us in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, concerning the collection for the saints, that "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." it seems becoming that at the worship meeting we should also bring unto the Lord our material offerings for

His work. This occasion is the most fitting time for the collection for the work of the Lord, the needs of the poor, etc. Thus at His Table we are privileged to render unto Him sacrifices of praise and sacrifices of our material goods, all in the spirit of worship. May our hearts be tuned to sing His praises and to offer up true Christian worship in spirit and in truth. May we so walk with the Lord during the week that our baskets of first fruits, as it were, may be filled with praises as we come into the gathering for worship each first day of the week, so that our hearts may overflow with worship in His presence. May we be able to say like the bride in the Song of Solomon: "at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved" (Song of Solomon 7:13).

02.20. 2. Prayer Meetings

2. Prayer Meetings The book of Acts shows us that prayer and prayer meetings had a large place in the activities of the New Testament believers and Assemblies. In the very beginning of the book we find that the disciples (about 120) continued with one accord in prayer and supplication at Jerusalem while they waited for the promised descent of the Holy Spirit. Prayer was one of the four things in which the newly-formed Assembly there continued steadfastly, following the great outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Throughout the Acts we read of believers coming together for collective prayer. We also find that prayer-meetings were convened in every time of difficulty and preceded great blessing from God. A remarkable instance of the power of collective prayer is given in Acts 4:1-37 : "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness ... And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:31, Acts 4:33).

Here we see a blessed result of united prayer in the Assembly and we learn that the way to spiritual power and boldness for Christ is by lifting up our voices to God with one accord in prayer. We must conclude, therefore, from this passage and numerous others about collective prayer in the Acts, that regular meetings for prayer are a necessity for an Assembly and that no Christian or gathering of Christians can prosper spiritually without coming together collectively for prayer. Stated meetings for prayer are a vital essential for every Assembly of believers. A weekly meeting for prayer ought to be a feature of every Assembly and special meetings for prayer should be called as special needs arise; this is what we see in the book of Acts.

United Prayer

Every careful reader of Scripture is aware of the large place that individual, private prayer has had in the lives of men of God in both the Old and New Testaments and some may think that private prayer is all that is necessary. We find, however, that there are special blessings in collective prayer and that the Lord gave a definite promise as to answering joint prayer. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:19). Here is a special promise that can only be realized when there is united, collective prayer.

One may pray privately at home and receive blessings and answers, but there is nothing like the prayers at the prayer-meeting, for Assembly prayer besieges the throne of grace and brings down special blessings, because it is the Assembly's prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. If the effectual fervent prayer of one righteous man availeth much (James 5:16), how much greater a result may be expected from the effectual, fervent prayers of an Assembly of righteous persons who are united in their petitions and energized by the Holy Ghost?

Assembly prayer is not just so many individuals uttering so many prayers for one thing, but the presentation of a single prayer, intensified 25 or 50 times by the harmony wrought by the Spirit of

God among the 25 or 50 persons present. They are all praying as one, presenting one petition and all saying, Amen, to the one petition going up to God in the name of the Lord Jesus. There is, therefore, special power in such united prayers. Such is the great power entrusted to the Church, which may be exercised in prayer and supplication for untold good and blessing for itself and others. But let us notice that one very necessary moral condition for assembly prayer is thorough oneness of mind, cordial agreement and unanimity. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them." The true force of the words is, "If two of you shall symphonize"-shall make one common sound. There must be no jarring note or lack of harmony and agreement among those that pray if there is to be effective assembly prayer. We must come before the throne of grace in holy harmony of 'heart, mind, and spirit, else we cannot claim an answer on the ground of our Lord's promise in Matthew 18:19. This holy agreement and oneness is what characterized the believers and the prayer-meetings recorded in the book of Acts and accounts for the spiritual power and immediate blessing which God granted them. "These all continued with one accord in prayer;" "they were all with one accord in one place;" "they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple;" "they lifted up their voice to God with one accord" (Acts 1:14; Acts 2:1; Acts 2:46; Acts 4:24).

Here is a point of immense moral weight with a great bearing upon the tone and character of our prayer-meetings. Why are our meetings for prayer often so poor, cold, dead, and powerless? Is it not oftentimes because believers fail to come together with one accord and with definite agreement in prayer for certain things? There is much lack today among believers of one heart and one mind and we need to challenge ourselves as to how far we are agreed in regard to the object or objects which are laid before the throne of grace in our meetings for prayer.

Definiteness

Often-times prayer-meetings are objectless in character and the prayers appear to be in rambling confusion. If we observe Scripture aright, would it not teach us that we should come together with some definite object or petitions on our hearts which we are going to present together to God? This is what characterized the prayer-meetings in Scripture. The disciples generally had some definite object before their hearts about which they were thoroughly agreed and about which they prayed with one accord. In Acts one and two they were all looking for the promised Spirit and they waited upon God with one accord till He came. In Acts four they prayed with one accord for boldness to speak God's word and that signs and wonders might be done by the name of Jesus. In Acts 12:1-25 prayer was made without ceasing by the Church for the release of Peter from prison. There was definiteness in their prayer-meetings and happy harmony which brought down power from on high and answers from God. When the disciples said unto the Lord, "Teach us to pray," He gave them a short, simple, and direct prayer. Then He told them about one going to a friend at midnight and asking him for three loaves, and, though he was first refused, yet because of his importunity or perseverance in asking, his request was granted (Luke 11:1-10). Here again we are taught to be definite in our prayers, and urgent, and also to persevere in the same. These words of our Lord tell us of a request presented out of a positive, felt need with one thing before the mind and heart. The request was simple, direct, pointed, and continued earnestness "Friend, lend me three loaves." It was not a long, rambling, dull statement about all sorts of things with lengthy explanations as are often heard in prayer-meetings.

Long Preaching Prayers

True prayer is not telling the Lord a host of things, repeating familiar phrases or making statements of doctrine as though we were trying to explain principles to God and give Him much information. Long preaching and teaching prayers are but lectures and expositions from men on their knees and do not conform to the Scriptural pattern of true public prayers. It is such utterances which cast a withering influence over our prayer-meetings and rob them of their freshness, interest, and power. The prayer-meeting is the place where our felt needs and weaknesses should be expressed and the place where blessings and power should be expected from God. We should go there to pour out our hearts to God in earnest petitions for blessings and fervent pleadings for the supply of our needs, the needs of the Church of God, and of souls. This is what true prayer is. A careful reading of the Scriptures will reveal that long public prayers are not the rule in the Bible. They are referred to by the Lord in terms of withering disapproval. "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking" (Matthew 6:7). Of the scribes He said, "Which devour widow's houses, and for a pretense make long prayers" (Mark 12:40). Solomon wisely said: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few . . . a fool's voice is known by multitude of words" (Ecclesiastes 5:1-3). We must, therefore, conclude from the above Scriptures that one who makes long public prayers puts himself in the same class as the heathen, the scribes, and fools, which is certainly not very complimentary. The longest recorded public prayer in the Bible is that of Solomon at the dedication of the temple and can be read in five minutes, while that blessed refreshing prayer of the Lord in John 17:1-26, the longest in the New Testament, can be read in three minutes. Brief, fervent, pointed prayers impart freshness, interest, and power to the prayer-meeting, but, as a general rule, long rambling teaching prayers exert a depressing, withering influence upon the meeting. It is far better for one to pray several times briefly in a prayer-meeting than to make one long prayer.

Faith and Forgiveness For effective prayer we must pray in faith. "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24). We must pray in simple faith with the full assurance in our hearts that we shall have what we are asking for. For prayers to reach the throne of grace, they must be borne on the wings of faith and come from earnest, believing hearts.

Following the above words about praying in faith, the Lord gave another requirement for effective prayer. "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses" (Mark 11:25). A forgiving spirit is necessary if our prayers are to be heard and answered. If hard feelings and grudges are held in one's heart against fellow believers there can be no real unity in prayer, the Spirit of God is hindered, and a dampening effect is produced and felt in the prayer meeting.

It is most important to remember that all true prayer must be in the Holy Ghost. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," "praying in the Holy Ghost" (Ephesians 6:18, Jude 1:20). For this the Spirit must be free, not grieved or quenched within our hearts or in the meeting.

It has often been said that the prayer-meeting is the spiritual pulse of an Assembly. The character and tone of this meeting is an indication and manifestation of the spiritual condition of the whole Assembly. If the prayer meeting is poorly attended and dull in spirit, the spiritual state of the gathering surely cannot be good. Anyone who willfully stays away from the meeting for prayer is certainly in a bad state of soul. The healthy, happy, earnest, diligent believer will be sure to be found at the prayer meeting if at all possible. May we know more of true prayer in the Holy Ghost and more fully put into practice the Scriptural example of prayer and the prayer-meeting and continue steadfastly therein.

02.21. 3. Meetings for Bible Reading and Study

3. Meetings for Bible Reading and Study

While we do not read in the New Testament of a specific meeting of the early Christians for the purpose of studying the Bible together or of their having Reading Meetings, as they are sometimes called, there are many Scriptures which would encourage the having of such a regular meeting of an assembly of believers. God's people need instruction in the truth, the lambs and sheep of Christ need to be fed and built up in the faith. An informal meeting for the study of God's Word and the reading together of the Scriptures affords opportunity for the meeting of these needs in a happy and simple way. We must not expect in this dispensation to find definite directions in the New Testament as to details of meetings, etc., for the Holy Spirit is here to guide us and He is to be unhindered in His activities and in the channels which He employs. If a practice is in accord with the general principles of Scripture and is for edification, we need not require further authorization for it.

Scriptural Examples As already stated, there are however, a number of Scriptures which give us the essentials of a meeting for Bible reading and study. Hebrews 10:25 exhorts us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together and encourages us to exhort one another, and so much the more as we see the day approaching. While this is a general exhortation as to the coming together of believers for various purposes, it would certainly furnish a Scriptural reason for coming together for the specific purpose of studying the Scriptures and exhorting one another. A notable example of coming together to read the Scriptures is found in Nehemiah 8:1-18; Nehemiah 9:1-38. There the people gathered together before the water gate and Ezra and his co-workers daily "read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading" (Nehemiah 8:8). One fourth part of the day they read in the book, or had Bible readings, while another fourth part of the day was spent in confession and worship (Nehemiah 9:3).

All the essentials of a Bible Reading are found also in that temple gathering of Luke 2:46-47, when Christ was in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, asking questions, and giving answers. These essentials are also found in those meetings at Laodicea and Colosse when the apostle's two letters were read for the first time to those assembled for the very purpose of hearing them (Colossians 4:16).

Further, the continuing steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, spoken of in Acts 2:42, would imply that believers must have habitually and diligently sought the apostle's actual company that they might profit by the holy conversation of those who had been with Jesus and had their understanding opened and were now clothed by the Holy Spirit's power to pass on all that they had learned as witnesses to Himself. Here, surely, are found the essential elements of the Bible Reading for the study of the Scriptures. They must have listened to the Old Testament Scriptures and to the apostles' doctrine in the New and had holy conversation together, asking and answering questions-all enjoyed together in fellowship by those gathered to share the spiritual treasures. This is the Bible Reading in all simplicity. Its Character

Such meetings, where the children of God sit around together, each with a Bible and each able to read it, look up the passages referred to, with liberty of all brothers to take part in comment or questions, gathered for the purpose of reading a portion of Scripture and helping one another in the understanding and application of it, have been a means of great blessing to souls, in the past century especially. It was in such meetings of a simple, informal character, held in private homes, public rooms and halls, that precious truths, long lost to the Church, were recovered. These truths were first hammered out and afterwards embodied like shining jewels in the expository writings that have been available in the past years and have so greatly enlightened hundreds and thousands of readers in the Word of God. The Bible Reading should have the character of a family gathering where fathers, young men, and babes in Christ alike coming together find interest, instruction, and inspiration as they sit around the written Word with the Holy Spirit present to guide into all truth. It is like the united family meal where upbuilding food is provided for every member of the family, young or old. There the instruction of the father in Christ is given and the gifted teacher imparts what he has gleaned from the Word. There, too, the babe in Christ asks questions on the Scriptures. Such questions often-times impart great freshness and stimulus to the meeting and result in much truth being brought out-clearer light, deeper insight, and "meat in due season" for the profit of all.

Blessings Without Gifts

While in this meeting the teacher's gift is most helpful and greatly enjoyed, much help is received on the Word by various ones expressing whatever understanding the Lord has given them concerning the passage under consideration. So that none need despair, therefore, where there is little gift among them for expounding the Scriptures, for the Lord will always bless the reading of His Word together if there is a sincere desire to receive something from Him.

Proverbs 13:23 tells us "Much food is in the tillage of the poor." The poor may scratch the ground with nothing but a broken tool. The rich man may work the soil with up-to-date and efficient implements. But it is God who giveth the increase to both. So in searching the Scriptures the Holy Spirit is the real power of increase. He dwells in every Christian, whether gifted or not, and produces food if we till the ground of God's Word. But without labor and searching our possessions will yield no profit.

Consecutive Studies

It will be found most helpful to take up and go regularly through different books of the Bible, especially the New Testament, and particularly the Epistles where the full light of truth for this dispensation of the Church is especially given. Such verse by verse consideration of the Bible, with opportunities for discussion and questions, has proven most helpful and results in souls being "Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith" (Colossians 2:7). Subjects which lead to various portions of the Word for consideration may also be taken up with profit. "The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit" would be an example of such a subject.

What one learns at a Reading Meeting comes quietly and gradually like the falling dew, so that one hardly notices how refreshing, stimulating, and establishing the truth is, but afterwards the good effect is realized. For those seeking excitement and entertainment, however, a Bible Reading may seem drab and dull.

Conditions Necessary for Blessing As with all other meetings, so with the Bible Reading certain conditions are necessary if there is to be blessing. There are also things which hinder blessing and rob the meeting of its freshness and fruitfulness. While liberty is given in such a meeting for any brother to take part, it should be remembered that liberty is not license. The Bible Reading is not the place for one to speak just to make oneself heard or to air one's peculiar ideas and talk about anything and everything. Those who take part in the Reading Meeting should do so in subjection to the Holy Spirit and unto "the edifying of the church" (1 Corinthians 14:12). In such a meeting individual, extravagant views and peculiarities of thought on the Scriptures need to be adjusted in humble, quiet discussion with a willingness to learn from one another.

It is necessary also to remember the exhortation of James 3:1 : "Be not many teachers, my brethren" (New Trans.), for sometimes there may be a tendency for a number of brothers to all pose as competent teachers. The result may sometimes be that ignorance is the most vocal. The Lord Himself sets us a wonderful example by taking the humble place. When He was young He was found among the doctors, "hearing them and asking them questions." When circumstances called for it, His divine knowledge was also undoubtedly displayed, for they ..were astonished at his understanding and answers."

Sometimes those who should speak and give out what they have of real profit are silent. To such the word is: "he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully" (Jeremiah 23:28). A happy, prayerful, humble spirit of subjection one to another and a readiness to receive the Word of God with meekness should prevail in the meeting. There should also be, on the part of all, a real spirit of dependence upon the Lord for blessing, rather than looking to human instruments which He may use for edification.

While digressions from the portion of the Word under consideration are sometimes helpful and profitable when they refer to other passages that apply on the subject or are an enlargement of the theme, care must be exercised that the discussions in the Reading Meeting be kept on the subject of the portion to be studied. There is always the tendency to get away from the subject when a number take part. Confusion of thought and lost blessing is the result. Long discussions on what is not of general interest and mutual profit and on controversial points should also be avoided. Points too difficult or where agreement thereon is not reached should likewise be dropped and left for further light.

Those who take part should remember to speak for the benefit of all present and to address their remarks to all and not just to the brother or brothers who may have just previously spoken. For this one must speak up and out so that all can hear and "words easy to be understood" (1 Corinthians 14:9) must be uttered. The foregoing are a few of the conditions necessary for profitable Bible Readings. May we all experience more of the spiritual blessings that are derived from a Spirit-led Bible Reading and Study.

Often the meetings for Prayer and for Bible Reading are profitably combined into one meeting where separate meetings for each are not possible or practical.

02.22. 4. Open Meetings for Ministry

4. Open Meetings for Ministry From 1 Corinthians 14:1-40 it is evident that the apostolic Church had what we may call "Open Meetings" for edification, exhortation, and comfort. That is, they had meetings which were open for any, under Scriptural limitations, to speak unto edification as the Spirit of God led. This is clearly set forth in the following verses: "it any man speak ... let it be by two, or at the most by three ... Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted" (1 Corinthians 14:27-31).

Such a meeting is to be limited to two or three speakers, so as not to bring in confusion of thought, and those who take part are exhorted to "Let all things be done unto edifying," and "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:26 and 1 Corinthians 14:40). The Open Meeting is an Assembly meeting where saints come together as an Assembly to wait upon the Lord for ministry, without any pre-arrangement as to speakers, counting upon Him to edify them by whomsoever He will. If none feel able to give an address to occupy the whole time, several may speak unto edification and profit, as the above Scriptures indicate. It is very important that a meeting of this character be regularly held for the upbuilding and encouragement of the Assembly.

Those who minister should seek to be faithful and wise stewards giving forth to the Lord's household "their portion of meat in due season." The Lord looks for such and He says: "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing" (Luke 12:42-43). It is not enough to merely speak correctly according to Scripture or to eloquently present a subject. The Lord would have ministry presented that is "meat in due season," the suitable and timely word for the needs of those gathered. This is what is meant by prophesying, which 1 Corinthians 14:1-40 stresses as most important and that which we should covet (1 Corinthians 14:39). It means to tell forth the mind of the Lord, or as Peter writes: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles (or mouthpiece) of God" (1 Peter 4:11) . It is giving living ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit and to meet present needs.

Assembly Meetings Defined

Thus far we have been considering the various meetings which are essentially reunions of the Assembly, such as the meeting for breaking of bread and worship, the meeting for prayer, the meeting for Bible reading and study, and the open meeting for ministry. These meetings may be spoken of as "Assembly meetings," or to use the expressions of Scripture, meetings "when ye come together in assembly," and "If therefore the whole assembly come together in one place" (1 Corinthians 11:18; 1 Corinthians 14:23, New Trans.), also "in assembly" as used in 1 Corinthians 14:28 and 1 Corinthians 14:35 (New Trans.).

Some, however, do not consider the Reading Meeting as an Assembly meeting, and perhaps it may be regarded as having a more informal character than the other Assembly meetings. In general, we may say that meetings are meetings of the Assembly if it is understood that they meet

as the Assembly and if the meeting is accepted as such by the Assembly.

Other Meetings

There are, however, other meetings beside Assembly meetings which should be held among a gathering of Christians. As already pointed out in section D-"The Divine Way of Ministry"-meetings are to be held by Christ's gifts to the Church and carried on as their own personal responsibility to the Lord. Such meetings should be entirely in the hands of those who are competent and who assume responsibility for them. These meetings are not to be confused with Assembly meetings where all are free to take part as led by the Holy Spirit. The meetings which Paul held at Ephesus in the synagogue and in the school of Tyrannus would be examples of meetings conducted by an individual (Acts 19:8-10). Under this heading would come meetings for the preaching of the Gospel, Sunday School or children's meetings, young people's meetings, Bible classes, and special meetings for ministry to Christians. With this word as to the distinction between Assembly meetings and meetings carried on by individuals, we may now consider the characteristics of these special meetings.

02.23. 5. Evangelistic Meetings and Efforts

5. Evangelistic Meetings and Efforts

Under this section we purpose to consider Gospel Meetings, Sunday Schools, and Children's Meetings. Such evangelistic work is most important and should form a vital part of the activities of every Assembly. Though not carried on by the Assembly as such, but by individuals called of the Lord for this work, the Assembly should encourage such meetings and support by prayer and material help all such efforts to reach the unsaved and to bring them in to hear the way of salvation to the end that they might be saved. In taking up evangelistic meetings last in order, we are not classing them as of lesser importance than those meetings previously considered. We have merely spoken first of the meetings carried on by the Assembly itself and would now take up evangelistic meetings as work carried on by individuals, for the preaching of the Gospel is a personal service, primarily to the unsaved, and secondarily to the saved as instructing them in the truth. This work is primarily for those gifted by the Lord as evangelists and the special sphere of labor is the world, more outside of the Assembly than within it.

However, every Assembly should have a stated Gospel Meeting and Sunday School for the work of evangelization of young and old. We firmly believe that the Scriptures would teach us that every Assembly should be a thoroughly evangelistic Assembly, warm hearted in the Gospel and energetic in seeking to reach the unsaved with the word of life. Paul could write to the Thessalonian Assembly: "For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad" (1 Thessalonians 1:8). The Assembly should be a real base of supply from which the Gospel goes forth into a dark world and from which evangelists and workers launch out into the streets and highways with the glad tidings of salvation, encouraged by the refreshing fellowship and prayers of those in the Assembly. As the four Gospels form the firm foundation of the New Testament, and as the reception of the Gospel is the foundation of the Christian life, so the preaching of the Gospel lies at the foundation of Assembly testimony. Any Assembly that has no heart for the Gospel is surely not an Assembly after the divine model in the Scriptures. The Epistle to the Philippians tells us how zealous the Assembly at Philippi was in the Gospel. Paul thanked God for their "fellowship in the gospel from the first day" (Php 1:3-4) and could say that in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel they were all partakers of his grace (Php 1:7). No individual is in a right condition of soul if he is not seeking in some way to bring souls to Christ, and no Assembly of Christians can be in a right spiritual condition if the members are not interested in the salvation of souls and in making efforts to bring the Gospel of God's grace to them. All believers are not able to preach the Gospel, but all can pray for souls to be saved and for those who proclaim the glad tidings. All can make efforts to bring some one to the Gospel Meetings. All should be able to witness to souls of Christ the Savior and to give out Gospel tracts. It does not matter what a person's gift is or whether he has any prominent gift at all, he can and ought to cultivate a longing desire for the salvation of souls.

If Assemblies and individuals are satisfied to go on from week to week, month to month, and year to year without a single Gospel effort and without a single conversion their state must be certainly very low. On the other hand, where the Assembly is drawn out in earnest prayer for the Gospel and for the salvation of souls there is freshness of spirit and zeal for souls and streams of blessing are bound to follow. Every new convert, truly born again, is a source of new joy and brings new life into the Assembly. Where there is no effort put forth in the Gospel and no conversions take place, a deadness and dullness among believers is found and there is bound to be a dying out because there is no going out with the Gospel.

Methods of Evangelism

We need to study the Scriptures and note the preaching of the apostles and follow them rather than the present day sensational and "high-pressure" evangelistic methods of some who seemingly seek to do the Lord's work in the world's way. We need more of God's work and less of man's. Let the preaching be in great earnestness with the love of Christ constraining souls to be reconciled to God and let the power of the Holy Spirit be counted upon to give the message and to cause the unsaved to "repent and believe the gospel." Let us not forget to preach repentance, man's lost and ruined estate, and God's full and complete remedy in the Gospel of His grace in Christ Jesus. For lasting results may we remember that it is, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord" (Zechariah 4:6). Think also of James 5:7-8. "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." His coming will bring the great harvest day and reveal the fruit of all the labors for Him and for the salvation of precious souls. In the meantime, let us earnestly sow the good seed of the Gospel upon the hearts of young and old everywhere and patiently wait for fruit to spring up, remembering that one genuinely converted soul is better than a hundred mere professions of conversion obtained by human means without the reality and power of the Holy Spirit.

It may be well to add here that the evangelist and Gospel worker must be left free as to methods and mode of carrying on his work, for he goes forth in the energy of personal and individual faith and stands on the ground of personal responsibility to Christ alone. "To his own master he standeth or falleth" (Romans 14:5), therefore we are not to judge another man's servant. He must not be tied down to certain rules and regulations or cramped by men of narrow minds, who object to everything that does not square with their own notions. Gospel workers are not to be held to the exact line of things and mode of acting which might be thought fitting for the Assembly Worship Meeting. A large hearted evangelist may feel perfectly free before his Lord and Master to do many things which might not commend themselves to the spiritual judgment and feelings of some in the Assembly. He may feel free to adopt a style of speaking and a mode of working which would be entirely out of place in Assembly meetings. But provided he does not violate any vital or fundamental principle of Scripture, we have no right to interfere with him or condemn him. He must be left free to labor in his own way and on his own individual responsibility to the Lord. The Assembly is not responsible for the peculiar mode in which one may carry on his work for the Lord. "Every one of us shall give account. of himself to Cod" (Romans 14:12). (See "Papers on Evangelization" by C. H. M., pages 64-65). The Lord gave the charge, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," but He did not. define the methods or mode in which it was to be done. He has left that up to the individual as guided by the Holy Spirit in each changing

period and varying circumstances amidst differing national customs and conditions. The apostle Paul said, "I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). "He that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30).

Sunday Schools The Lord Jesus said: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." Once He "called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them. And said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children_, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven ... And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me . . . Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones" (Mark 10:14; Matthew 18:2-3; Matthew 18:5; Matthew 18:10). So the children of our lands should not be forgotten in our evangelistic efforts.

Yes, children constitute the most fruitful field for evangelistic work for their hearts are yet tender and susceptible to the heavenly call of Christ through His Word. They have not been hardened as yet by sin and are in the formative period of life when character is shaped and destinies are settled. A psychologist has said, "A person rarely ever changes his habits after he has reached his majority years." And it is estimated that only one person out of a thousand is converted after the age of 20. A questionnaire sent to 1,500 preachers asking them the age of their conversion, revealed that the average age was twelve years. A judge in Brooklyn, N. Y., said that out of 2,700 boys brought before his court, not one of them was a Sunday School pupil.

All these facts show the importance and blessedness of evangelistic effort among children and youth. The purpose of the Sunday School is to teach the children the precious truths of the Bible, the fact of man's sinful condition, the full salvation in Christ Jesus, and the path and work of a Christian in this world. Not only should they be taught these things, but we should seek to win their hearts for Christ and pray for their conversion. In writing about the Sunday School, we feel we cannot do better than to present to our readers an excellent letter on this subject by the well - known servant of the Lord, C. H. Mackintosh. It was written many years ago and is as follows:

"Dear Friend,

"We are truly thankful that you have commenced the Sunday School, and we count it a real privilege to be allowed to comply with your request for a word of counsel as to the mode of running it.

"The longer we live, the more highly we prize the blessed work of Sunday School teaching. We look upon it as most interesting and delightful; and we believe that every assembly of Christians, gathered in the Name of the Lord Jesus, should support such work by their sympathy and prayers.

"Some, we are sorry to say, exhibit much lukewarmness in reference thereto, and others seems to disapprove of such work altogether. They look upon it as an interference with the duty devolving upon Christian parents to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This, we own, would be a grave objection, were it well founded; but it is not so, for the Sunday School is not designed to interfere with, but to assist, or supply the total lack of, parental teaching and training. There are thousands of dear children thronging the alleys, lanes, and courtyards of all our large cities and towns who either have no parents, or else parents utterly unable or unwilling to instruct them. It is on these the Sunday School teacher fixes his benevolent eye. No doubt he is glad to see all sorts occupying his benches; but the poor, the ragged, the neglected, the outcast,

are his special objects.

"It is impossible to tell where and when the fruit of a Sunday School teacher's work may turn up. It may be on the burning sands of Africa, or amid the frozen regions of the North; in the depths of the forest, or on the ocean wave; it may be at the present time, or it may be years after the workman has gone to his eternal rest. But, let it be when or where it may, the fruit will assuredly be found, when the seed has been sown in faith and watered by prayer.

"It may be that the Sunday School pupil will grow up a wicked youth-a wicked man; he may seem to have forgotten everything good, holy, and true to have worn out, by his sinful practices, every sacred impression; and yet, notwithstanding all, some precious clause of holy Scripture, or some sweet hymn, remains buried in the depths of memory, beneath a mass of folly and profanity; and this Scripture or this hymn may come to mind, in some quiet moment, or it may be on a dying bed, and be used of the Holy Ghost, for a quickening and saving of the soul. Who can attempt to define the importance of getting hold of the mind while it is young, fresh, and plastic, and of seeking to impress it with heavenly things?

"But we may, perhaps, be asked, 'Where, in the New Testament, have we any warrant for the special work undertaken by the teacher or the superintendent of a Sunday School?' We reply, It is only one way of preaching the Gospel to the unconverted, or of expounding the holy Scriptures to the children of God. Properly speaking, the Sunday School is a profoundly interesting branch of evangelistic labour, and we need hardly say, we have ample authority in the pages of the New Testament for this.

"But, alas, there are too many amongst us who have no heart for any branch of Gospel service, whether amongst the young or the old, and not only do they neglect it themselves, but throw cold water on those who are seeking to do the blessed work. And as it sometimes happens that those who raise objections to Sunday Schools and stated Gospel preachings seem to be persons of intelligence, their words are all the more likely to weigh with young Christians.

"But to you, dear friend, we say, Let nothing discourage you in the work you have undertaken. It is a good work, and go on with it regardless of all objectors. We are told to be ready for every good work, and not to be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not (Galatians 6:9).

"And now a word as to the mode of working a Sunday School. You must remember it is an individual service to be carried on in personal responsibility to the Lord. No doubt it is most important to have full fellowship in your work with your fellow labourers, and with all your brethren; but the work of a superintendent or a teacher must be carried on in direct personal responsibility to the Lord, and according to the measure of grace imparted by Him. The Assembly is no more responsible and no more involved in this work than in any other individual service, such as the Sunday evening preaching, cottage meetings, lectures or Bible classes; though most assuredly the Assembly, if in a spiritual, healthy condition, will have the fullest fellowship with the Sunday School, as well as with the entire range of personal work for the Lord.

"You will find, if we mistake not, that in order to work a Sunday School effectively, you must have a good superintendent-a person of energy, order, and rule. The old proverb, 'What's everybody's business is nobody's business,' is especially applicable here. We have seen several Sunday

Schools come to the ground from not being properly worked. Persons take up the work for a time, and then let it drop. This will never do. The superintendent, the teachers, and the visitors must enter upon their blessed work, not by fits and starts, but with calm determination and spiritual energy; and having entered upon it, they must carry it on with real purpose of heart. It will not do for the superintendent to leave his school, or the teacher to leave his class, to chance. under the plea of leaving it to the Lord. We believe the Lord expects him to be at his post, or to find a proper substitute in case of illness or any other unavoidable cause of absence.

It is of the utmost importance that every branch of Sunday School work should be undertaken and carried on with freshness, heart-zeal and energy, and thorough personal devotedness. And, inasmuch as these can only be had at the Divine Treasury, all who are engaged in the service should meet together for prayer and conference. Nothing can be more deplorable than to see a Sunday School falling into decay through lack of diligence and perseverance on the part of those who have taken it up. No doubt there are many hindrances; and the work itself is very uphill and very discouraging; but, oh! if our words have any weight, we would say, with heartfelt emphasis, to all who are engaged in this most precious service, Let nothing damp your ardour, or hinder the work. Go on! go on! and may the Lord of the harvest crown your labours with the richest and the best blessings.

"We need hardly remark that we do not contemplate such a thing as unconverted persons taking any part in the work of Sunday Schools. Indeed, we know of few things more sad than to see a person engaged in teaching others that in which the teacher has neither part nor lot himself. No doubt God is sovereign, and He can and does use His own word, even in the lips of an unconverted person; but this in no wise alters the melancholy fact in reference to the person so used. We could not think for a single moment of admitting or inviting any one to take part in the work of a Sunday School, if we had not satisfactory evidence of his conversion to God. To do so would be to help him on in fatal delusion."-C. H. M. In closing we would remark that Sunday Schools should not only be carried on in Assembly halls, but in as many different places as is possible. Meetings among children can be successfully carried on on week-days also, in homes or wherever doors are open. Daily Vacation Bible Schools in the summer-time have proved to be a wonderful way of getting the Gospel to the children and instructing them in God's Word. Bible Camp work among children has also been a great blessing likewise among the youth. May the Lord raise up many able and diligent workers to teach and win the young for Christ.

02.24. 6. Woman's Place

6. Woman's Place

Every thoughtful reader will surely agree that God has given woman a special and wonderful place in the family and in society and that she is especially fitted of Him for this unique place which no man can properly fill. Scripture, from beginning to end, shows us woman's special place in creation, in the fall of humanity, under the law in the Old Testament, and under grace in the Church of the New Testament. We shall see from the Word of God that woman has her own sphere of service and that it is a very blessed and necessary one.

While our subject is woman's Scriptural place in the Church, it will be very helpful to a proper understanding of our topic to consider first her place in creation, in the fall, in the home, and under the law. The discerning of woman's God-given place in these spheres will give us the proper background for considering and understanding her Scriptural place in the Church. In Creation

We learn from Genesis 2:1-25 that man was created first, and that from Adam's rib God made a woman and brought her unto man to be an helpmeet for him. In 1 Corinthians 11:8-12 the Spirit of God has recorded the following comment upon this: "For man is not of woman, but woman of man. For also man was not created for the sake of the woman, but woman for the sake of the man. Therefore ought the woman to have authority on her head, on account of the angels. However, neither (is) woman without man, nor man without woman, in (the) Lord. For as the woman (is) of the man, so also (is) the man by the woman, but all things of God" (New Trans.). Here is an exquisitely guarded and balanced presentation of the truth of the relationship of man and woman. The very fact that woman was taken out of man proves her equality with him. She is not his inferior, but his equal, his helpmeet. There is equality, but with it diversity. Woman was made for man and to be with him at his side. God never intended that woman should be an independent creature apart from man, but that she should be associated with him, and that together they should be one flesh typifying Christ and His bride, the Church. Woman never shines more brightly than when fulfilling the object for which she was created, which primarily was to be man's helpmeet.

However, we must notice that the very fact that woman was made of the man indicates that man is her head. This is the deduction which the Spirit of God brings before us in the above quoted verses of 1 Corinthians 11:1-34 -"Therefore (in view of her place in creation), ought the woman to have authority on her head, (i. e., a token of the authority of man under which she stands) on account of the angels." The apostle says, "I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man" (1 Corinthians 11:3). Because of this divine order in creation, woman is to recognize man's headship and to have on her head the sign of his' authority over her, that is, a covering on her head, especially when she prays or prophesies and when she is in the Assembly (1 Corinthians 11:5-10). The angels are to behold God's order in creation and in the Church.

We shall have more to say later regarding woman having her head covered; we merely refer to this now in connection with her place in creation and as to the consequent recognition of man as her head, which the head covering signifies according to Scripture. In 1 Corinthians 11:14-15, the apostle refers to nature as a further evidence of the distinction between man and woman and of her proper place of subjection. "Does not even nature itself teach you, that man, if he have long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But woman, if she have long hair, (it is) glory to her; for the long hair is given (to her) in lieu of a veil" (New Trans.). God has given long hair to woman and short hair to man as a distinguishing mark between them. It is natural for woman to have long hair and for man to have short hair.

Long hair is generally in Scripture a symbol of dependence, submission, and of that modesty that becomes woman as "the weaker vessel" to which man is to give honor (1 Peter 3:7). The passage before us in 1 Corinthians 11:1-34 speaks of woman's hair as her glory. A woman only manifests the glory and beauty put upon her when she abides in her God-given place of dependence and subjection and maintains her feminine character. The more feminine woman is, the more beautiful and pleasing to God she is. The more woman tries to appear like a man and to take his place, the more she loses her true beauty and virtue. The expression "Does not even nature itself teach you?" is capable of wide application to our present subject. The natural constitution and temperament of man and woman are quite diverse. God in His wisdom put great differences in the physical, mental, and emotional make-up of man and woman. He has given man superior height, strength, and reasoning equipment, and in happy contrast has given to woman natural grace, gentleness, and mental nimbleness, fitting her especially for the domestic circle. The Creator has most evidently so constituted them by nature to fill distinct and separate places, yet to be supplementary to each other.

Thus we learn from creation and nature that woman has a distinct place from that of man in society and we shall see that her God-given place in the Church is in harmony with her place in creation and nature. Yea, we will find that her place in creation fixes her place in the Church as well, and that her place in nature is illustrative of her place in grace, or of her relation as a Christian woman to God. The two are inseparable. God does not give woman or man a place in the Church which is contrary to their place in creation and nature. In the Fall

Having seen from creation that woman's place is one of subjection to her head and companionship with him, we will now consider what part she had in the fall of humanity in the garden of Eden, and what place she was given in consequence thereof. From the divine account in Genesis 3:1-24, we learn that the serpent tempted mother Eve to take of the forbidden fruit and that she was the one who took of it and ate thereof and also gave unto her husband who likewise ate of it (Genesis 3:1, Genesis 3:6). Because of this, God said to Eve, "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Genesis 3:16).

Here we see the first woman, Eve, leaving her natural place of dependence and taking the lead. Instead of repelling the serpent's advances and seeking the help and protection of her God-given head she acted in independence and was beguiled by the serpent into disobedience of God's command. Therefore, God definitely pronounced that her place was to be one of subordination to her husband.

Furthermore, we are not even left to make our own deductions from these facts, for the Spirit of God refers to this deception of Eve by Satan in 1 Timothy 2:11-14, and gives it as a reason why women in this present Church age are not to usurp authority over the man. There we read: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but, to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

Here we have two reasons given why woman is not to teach in the Church. One is Adam's first place in creation, implying headship, and the other, that the woman was deceived by the Serpent. Adam was not deceived as was the woman; he sinned with his eyes open and was more guilty than his wife, but it was Eve who was deceived. Such was her part in the fall of humanity, and since she proved herself a bad leader in this respect, in God's wise government she is debarred from the place of authority or teaching in the Church. Thus here we get the first and most powerful warning against woman taking the lead. It is surely a vivid warning signal at the very start of man's journey across the sea of time. As another has observed: "When women get out of their place, they appear to be the special prey of the devil. It is a woman in the parable, who introduced the leaven into the three measures of meal (Matthew 13:33) -type of the introduction of corrupting principles which have permeated the Christian profession. It was a woman-Eve-who was "in the transgression."

"They are 'silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,' who are led captive by evil men in the perilous times of the last days (2 Timothy 3:6). It is a woman-Jezebel-who stands historically in the Old Testament page as an example of all that is disgusting and wicked; who stands figuratively in Revelation as the example of ecclesiastical corruption and religious depravity of the worst type (1 Kings 21:1-29; Revelation 2:20).

"In the present day the great majority of spiritist mediums are women; modern spiritism began with women the Fox sisters in America. It was a hysterical woman-Mrs. White-who by her blasphemous pretensions has been the leader, and largely the inventor, of that wicked system-Seventh-Day Adventism.

"Christian Science-which is neither Christian nor scientific-owes its origin to Mrs. Eddy-a woman. (We may add that a survey of Christian Science Practitioners in a certain large city reveals that 75% are women-g. K. C.) Theosophy, as known in the Western hemisphere, was popularized by a woman-Madam Blavatsky; her work was carried on by a woman-Mrs. Besant" (A. J. Pollock). To this list one might add the present-day Tongues Movement, with its attendant fanaticism, etc., in which women are the most prominent and enthusiastic leaders. This is not indeed to slight woman, for morally she is generally of finer qualities than man and, as a rule, she exceeds him in affection and devotion to Christ. Nor is it a question here of woman's ability, for it is gladly admitted that compared with man, she manifests no inferiority of genius, culture, tact, speech, etc. It is only positionally that man is above woman, and the point which we wish to emphasize here is merely this: that when woman departs from her God-given place and sphere of service and takes a place of teaching and leading she often becomes the special victim of Satan's deceptions and the propagator of his falsehoods and heresies. This is the lesson which we should learn from Eve in the garden of Eden and from woman's subsequent history. On the other hand, when woman abides in her God-given place, she is a most effective power for good and her presence and

power in the service of Christ are, under God, vitally essential to the success and continuance of the Church. The Bible is full of examples of godly, faithful, and devoted women who performed great services for God in their divinely appointed spheres. Of this we shall have more to say later.

Gathering up what has been before us, we may summarize it thus: as a consequence of the fact that Eve was deceived by Satan and took the lead in the act of the first sin, woman was put (in the governmental dealings of God) in a place of subordination to man, and she is to learn in silence with all subjection and is never to exercise authority over man. This is what we learn as to woman's Scriptural place because of her part in the fall of humanity in Eden. This divinely appointed status remains unchanged in the present Church period of Grace. Furthermore, as has been pointed out, woman's history has only proved the wisdom and justice of the circumscription of her sphere as imposed by God.

Holy Women of Old The apostle Peter, in exhorting wives as to their behavior, speaks of the manner of holy women of old time and gives the conduct of Sarah as an example. As these words which the Holy Spirit has given us through Peter are helpful in our present subject of "Woman's Place in the Church" we shall quote them here. "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation (behavior) of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation (behavior) coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are" (1 Peter 3:1-6).

These words are very clear in themselves and need little comment. Sarah, whom we would judge from the Old Testament to have been a woman of vigorous and masterful personality, stands as an example of holy women of old who abode in subjection unto their husbands and manifested a chaste behavior. This clearly gives us the position of woman in relation to man and the practice followed by godly women of old.

Under the Law In connection with the preceding, we would make a brief reference to woman's place under the law. When the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian Assembly instructing them as to woman's place in the Assembly, he said they were "to be under obedience, as also saith the law" (1 Corinthians 14:34). It is not a particular passage or precept that he refers to, but the whole tenor of the Old Testament. Throughout the dispensation of the Law we find woman's place to be that of subjection and obedience and not of leadership or authority.

Thus we see clearly that Creation, the Fall, and the Law, all unite in pointing out the place of subjection as woman's divinely appointed position. With this Scriptural background, we are now ready to consider woman's place in this present dispensation of Grace, both in the home and in the Assembly. In the Dispensation of Grace

We have thus far considered woman's place in creation, in the fall of humanity, and under the law, and have noticed that Scripture mentions her position in each of these spheres in connection with instructions as to her place in the Church. We shall now study in particular woman's place in the

New Testament, or in this present age of Grace, known as the Church period. In the Home

We have already mentioned, along with other spheres, the home as being one of the circles in which it is important to discern woman's God-given position. Since the home naturally comes before the Church in moral order and in order of time as it is the foundation of all society, it is proper that we first consider the special place that Scripture gives woman in this most blessed sphere. This will also help us to better see the divinely prescribed position given to women in the Church, for her place in the home and in the Church are necessarily in harmony with each other and if a woman learns to take her proper place in the home she will most likely discern her proper place in the Church. The basic relationship of the home is that of husband and wife, and then, if children are given, there is that happy affinity of father, mother, and children. In this delightful relationship of a wife, or a wife and a mother, a woman occupies a very important and influential place in the home. A home is not a real home without a godly wife or mother.

We have previously referred to the place which God gave to Eve as Adam's helpmeet. Brought to him by God, she took her place at his side as his wife and the helpmeet of God's providing. She was created to be his partner and the companion of his bosom-one flesh with himself. Man having been created first, he was her head, and when the Fall came, God definitely said that she was to be subject to her husband's rule. She was, however, not to be trampled upon by him, but to be at his side in equality with him, under his arm to be protected by him, and near his heart to be loved by him. This is woman's special place in the marriage relationship as ordained of God in creation. But from the Fall to the Cross we hear nothing of woman's right place in creation. "The heathen had degraded her into being man's slave. By the law she was protected from being trampled on under certain circumstances (Exodus 21:1-36; Leviticus 18:18); yet she never had, under the Mosaic economy, her proper place with man. But after the manifestation of the Second man (Christ), and the accomplishment of His work of atonement, the original order of creation is again adverted to, and woman regains her true place with man" (C. E. Stuart). This proper place we find set forth in Ephesians 5:22-23. Here husbands are told to love their wives as their own bodies and as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. And wives are exhorted to submit themselves unto their own husbands as unto the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church. Therefore as the Church is subject to Christ, so the wives are to be to their husbands in everything. While the husband is to see that he loves his wife even as himself, the wife is exhorted to reverence her husband. This is God's order for man and wife in the home in this dispensation of Grace. Though the wife is to be tenderly cared for and regarded in highest love by the husband, she is to own him as the head of the home, to be subject to him, and to reverence him. She is to do this "as unto the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22), recognizing the Lord behind her husband, as the One from whom her husband's authority is derived. She is also to remember that in her submission to her husband she is a type and reflection of the Church's subjection to Christ, its head. Wondrous privilege indeed! In 1 Timothy 5:14 the younger women are told to "marry, bear children, guide the house." Guiding and ordering the household is woman's special work, but the husband is the responsible head of the house. A woman who assumes the headship of the house to the contempt of her husband will surely be unhappy and wretched, and will certainly reap the bitter fruits of her own rebellion in the lawlessness of her children brought up in disorder. Though women today demand liberty and equal rights with men and feminine submission is unpopular to a great extent and cast aside, it is still God's desire and command that the wife be

in subjection to the husband as the head of the house. Without this there can be no true joy and blessing in the home-life.

Having seen woman's position in the marriage relationship and in the home, we may now consider her service in this blessed sphere. Much of a woman's time is spent in the home performing the commonplace duties of life. A great service is thereby rendered unto God for Colossians 3:23-24 says, "whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord . . . for ye serve the Lord Christ." In caring for the needs of her husband and children and in keeping up the home as a place of refreshment, cheer, and shelter in a world of trouble, a woman fills a very important place indeed. The mother is truly the center and the heart of the home. The attractions of home depend largely upon the attitude and spirit of the wife. The prudent wife who manages her household with wise and thrifty economy and graces the home with love and cheerfulness is a great blessing to her husband and children and to all who enter her home. A husband's success or ruin in life often depends upon his wife's conduct in the home. Many men today owe their position in life largely to the wisdom and sound judgment of their wives. The practice of that true Christian virtue of hospitality in the home is largely made possible by the wife. This is a most valuable and needy service in the Church and certainly brings a rich reward of present and future blessings. In this way women have a real part in the work of Christ-opening their homes to the Lord's servants and to the Lord's people and also to the unsaved, that they might hear the Gospel and be saved. The account of Aquila and Priscilla who invited Apollos to their home and taught him the way of God more perfectly is an example of such service (Acts 18:26).

One of the most valuable services of a mother in the home is the training of children. This is her special work since she spends more time with the children than the father and exercises a powerful influence over their lives for good or bad. Notice how often the mother's name is given in the books of Kings and Chronicles in connection with the various kings of Israel. The Spirit of God thus points out to us what was probably the most important factor in the moulding of the character of the men who ruled God's people the influence of the mother. The foundation of the child's character is laid in the home training and the mother's hand is the instrument which God delights to use in this work. The mother's most important and divinely-appointed work is in the home with her children and she should devote herself wholly to their care, training, and upbringing. If a mother neglects this momentous work in the home or leaves it to others while she seeks to do service for the Lord in other spheres, she leaves her work undone and will surely fail to rightly accomplish someone else's work to which she has not been called. The teaching and training which children receive from their mothers during their young years when sensibilities are tender is most influential upon their whole after life and will leave an impression upon their young, plastic, and receptive minds and hearts which cannot be erased. How important, then, is the work of mothers in the homes. May it not be neglected.

Thus we observe and must declare that it is in the home circle that woman finds her special sphere in which to serve and glorify God. It is here in the more private domain of her own that she shines the brightest and exerts the most influence for good. Domestic life, which is often despised and forsaken by women today, is the place which she is best fitted to fill.

We do not mean by this that there is no service which woman can do or that there is no work which she can perform in assembly life. We merely state that the home or domestic circle is

preeminently the sphere of woman's service. And in this home sphere, we see that her Scriptural place is one of subjection and submission to her husband. In the foregoing we have mainly considered the position and service of married women in the home sphere. The unmarried will, however, find a real field of Christian service in the domestic circle also. They, too, can serve in temporal things, care for children, the sick, and the aged, or by the work of their hands clothe the needy as did Dorcas (Acts 9:39). With the background of woman's place in creation, her part in the fall, her place under the law, and in the home in this dispensation, which has previously been before us, we are now ready to take up woman's Scriptural place in public and in God's Assembly.

Public Teaching In connection with woman's part in the fall of humanity in Eden, we have already quoted 1 Timothy 2:11-14, and noted the governmental restrictions therein put upon women. It will be well for us to again have those verses before us in connection with our present phase of the subject. "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

These verses apply to a wider sphere than that of the gathered Assembly. They speak of proper conduct as between man and woman and would include any public testimony where both sexes are present. They refer to public teaching of mixed audiences, for exercising authority over man is spoken of. Woman is never to set herself up as a teacher or to teach in meetings of mixed sexes, for then man is at her feet as a learner, which is reversing God's order.

Man was first formed and is God's representative and head and should maintain his rightful position as leader and teacher. Because Eve took the lead in transgressing and was deceived by Satan (manifesting that she was a poor leader), in God's government women are barred from taking the place of authority and teaching. They are to learn in silence and subjection. A woman, then, is never to take a public place as a recognized teacher of God's Word or to teach in the Assembly or anywhere in mixed audiences where she takes a place of equality with or is set over men, for then she is usurping authority over man.

We find, however, that Titus 2:3-4 instructs elder women to be "teachers of good things," and "That they may teach the young women," etc. Here elder women are given the right to teach, but the sphere is defined to young women and the teaching is rather of an informal character on practical subjects pertaining more to the home and family (Titus 2:3-5). Helping ignorant women on Scripture and free intercourse with them on the Word is quite proper. One would encourage sisters to labor diligently for the Lord in such spheres. Even the quiet communication of the Gospel in conversation with men is proper for a woman, if done in a modest becoming way. Such work, of course, may slip into formal teaching, and then a woman is out of her place. If she sets up a regular public teaching lecture on Scripture, even if only women were present, we believe it would be taking the place of a teacher and a violation of 1 Timothy 2:12 "I suffer not a woman to teach."

Teaching the Bible to children and praying and singing with them is also a proper and valuable service for women. Such work begins in the home and is continued in the Sunday School and in children's meetings. The Sunday School in the Assembly is simply an enlargement of a family gathering, removed from the home to larger and more convenient quarters. Therefore, it would be quite proper for sisters to teach Sunday School classes of children or young women, especially when they are in charge of brethren under whose direction they serve. When young brothers or

any brethren are part of a Sunday School, we believe it would be against Scripture for any sister to be the superintendent of the School, for that would be exercising authority over the man. Our prayer is that more faithful women might be active for the Lord and encouraged to work in these spheres which we have spoken of as woman's proper domain. They are greatly needed and the work of the Lord languishes for the lack of the services of devoted, energetic sisters. May the Lord richly bless every woman engaged in proper work for Him. In the Assembly

1 Corinthians 14:34-38 gives us clear instructions as to the woman's place in the gathered Assembly. "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant."

Here it is plainly laid down that a woman is not to speak in the Church. The expression, "in the church," or "in the churches," is used five times in this chapter and it always means the gathering of Christians in assembly, the coming together of the whole Church. In such an Assembly meeting women are not to speak at all, but are to be in silence and under obedience. In 1 Corinthians 11:5 the apostle speaks of a woman praying or prophesying. This passage permits such activity by a woman but does not indicate where it was to be exercised. 1 Corinthians 14:1-40 distinctly says such ministry of women is not permitted in the Assembly, but that there she is to keep silent. It is quite evident, then, that it is outside of the Assembly that a woman is to pray and prophesy. Acts 21:8-9 speaks of Paul's company coming to the house of Philip the evangelist. This man had four daughters who prophesied. It would certainly seem from the context that they prophesied at home and not in the Assembly; this was quite in order.

It is important that we notice that this prohibition of women speaking in the Assembly is not just the word of the apostle Paul—a bachelor, as some would speak of him, but that these things are "the commandments of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37). Therefore, if any one would be spiritual and pleasing to the Lord in this matter he or she must acknowledge that these injunctions are the statutes of God. It is simply a matter of obedience to God's expressed will. To try to reason around this plain Scripture, as so many do, and go on in self-will and disobedience shows that the heart is not willing to do God's will and that His Word is not respected. The Corinthians, as also many today, may have thought themselves free to do as they pleased in this matter. The apostle, therefore, says "What! came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?" (1 Corinthians 14:36); that is to say, "Have you authority from the Lord as to what you shall do in this matter? The Word of God has not come from you . . . but to you." They were, therefore, to submit to the commandment of the Lord by the apostle.

It is sometimes said that the word "speak" in this passage means to "chatter," gossip, or whisper during service, and that this was what the apostle was prohibiting. But this is a very erroneous and misleading statement which is not at all correct. Young's Concordance shows that it is the Greek word "laleo" which is used here and in the whole chapter. It is translated "speak" throughout this chapter and 241 times in the New Testament. It means to talk or speak. Thus in the same sense that the prophets are to speak two or three (1 Corinthians 14:29), the women are not to speak in

the Assembly. It is the same word in both cases.

Others would say that this prohibition against women speaking in the Assembly applied only to Corinth where the women were quite ignorant, loud, and brazen and unable to take part publicly. The first statement is quite wrong and the second is mere assumption. The beginning of this Corinthian Epistle shows us that Paul addressed it, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth ... with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:2).

Surely this is decisive. The instructions given in this Epistle are not of mere local application, but are also addressed to all professing Christians everywhere. In the very passage under discussion the apostle speaks of women keeping silence in the "churches." He does not say "in your church," but "in the churches."

Woman's place is one of subjection and retirement in the Assembly and not of leadership. Man is comparatively the mind of humanity and woman is the heart. The heart is in the chest, hidden from view, while the head is outside and public. Those who take part publicly in the Church take a place of leadership in the Assembly, whether in prayer, praise, or ministry, and this place of leadership is not given to women.

Many do not realize that even if one prays publicly, that is leading the gathered Assembly in prayer. It is not merely an individual praying. That one is the mouthpiece of the Assembly in prayer or in praise. Therefore, for a woman to pray in an Assembly prayer meeting or in a mixed meeting would be taking a place of leadership contrary to Scripture. In 1 Timothy 2:8 the apostle says, "I will therefore that men pray everywhere." This unlimited liberty in prayer is not given to women. In this respect we can also learn from Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:9-17. This godly woman prayed in the house of the Lord, when worshippers were assembled. Notice it says of her, "she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard" (1 Samuel 1:13). To have audibly prayed in that mixed company would not have been proper, yet she could pray in her heart and God heard and answered. So also today women can likewise pray and praise in their hearts in the gathered Assembly and join in the "Amen" to public prayer and praise.

Covering Her Head We will now consider the matter of woman having a covering on her head while praying or prophesying and when in the Assembly. The apostle gives instructions as to this in 1 Corinthians 11:3-16. There we read: "But I wish you to know that the Christ is the head of every man, but woman's head (is) the man, and the Christ's head God. Every man praying or prophesying, having (anything) on his head, puts his head to shame. But every woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered puts her own head to shame; for it is one and the same as a shaved (woman). For if a woman be not covered, let her hair also be cut off. But if (it be) shameful to a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, let her be covered. For man indeed ought not to have his head covered, being God's image and glory; but woman is man's glory. For man is not of woman, but woman of man. For also man was not created for the sake of the woman, but woman for the sake of the man. Therefore ought the woman to have authority (i. e. a token of the authority under which she stands) on her head, on account of the angels. Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman should pray to God uncovered?" (New Trans.). From these Scriptures we see that God has established a certain headship and order which He desires we should recognize and observe. It is not just a matter of custom for men to have their heads uncovered and women to have theirs covered in the presence of the Lord. There is a real Scriptural reason and significance

to this order.

God is the head of Christ, Christ is man's head and man is woman's head. Since man is the image and glory of God and Christ is His head, it would be a dishonor and a shame to Christ, his head, if man would have his own head covered when praying and prophesying (peaking publicly). Christ's glory is to be seen and covered. But the woman was created for man and of man and she is the glory of man, therefore her head must be covered when she prays or prophesies, for man's glory must not be seen, especially in the gathered Assembly. Christ's glory and not man's is to be displayed there.

Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 11:10 says that the woman ought to have authority on her head because of the angels. That is, she should have a covering on her head as a sign of the authority of man to whom she is subject. When a woman wears a covering on her head in the presence of the Lord, it is an acknowledgment that the man is her God-given head. A woman that comes into the presence of the Lord without a head covering shows thereby that she wants to be like the man and that she does not want to take the subject place. She dishonors her head, though she may not be conscious of it. It may be done in ignorance, but this is what it means. The angels are spectators in the Assembly and they should see God's order observed there. They see order in heaven and in all creation and they ought not to see disorder amongst Christians. The seraphim's cover themselves in the presence of the Lord (Isaiah 6:1-3), and they look to see women doing the same in obedience to God's Word. God purposes that "the principalities and powers in heavenly places" might learn "by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10-11). This "wisdom of God" is the mystery of Christ and the Church, which is typified by husband and wife, one the head and the other subject to him (Ephesians 5:22-32).

Covering one's head applies to unmarried women as well as to married women. Woman in general and man in general is spoken of in these verses of 1 Corinthians 11:1-34. Numbers 30:3-5 teaches that a woman in her father's house in her youth must be subject to his authority. Her vows could only stand if her father allowed them. Like wise a wife's vows were only valid if her husband allowed them. So a woman is to acknowledge the authority of her father or her husband or man in general when in the presence of the Lord. Her head-covering is a token of this.

Shame of Uncovered Head

"But every woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered puts her own head to shame; for it is one and the same as a shaven (woman). For if a woman be not covered, let her hair also be cut off. But if (it be) shameful to a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaven, let her be covered." When a woman's head was uncovered or shaven in the Old Testament it was a mark of shame, as is seen in Numbers 5:18 where a wife was under suspicion by her husband and in Deuteronomy 21:10-13 regarding a beautiful woman taken captive by an Israelite. So here in 1 Corinthians 11:1-34 the apostle says that if a woman prays or prophesies with her head uncovered, it is the same as if her head was shaven. And since having her hair cut off or shaven is a mark of shame, she should have her head covered. She must have no marks of shame upon her in the presence of the Lord. She is not to appear before God as one who is suspected of being unfaithful to her husband. The covering on her head would indicate that she owns him as her head and enjoys his fullest confidence. In passing, it is well to notice from these verses in 1 Corinthians 11:1-34 that it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut off, but "If a woman have long hair, it is

a glory to her" (1 Corinthians 11:15). These words of Holy Writ should settle the question of "bobbed hair" for any godly woman. Should a woman cut off any of her God-given glory and throw it away? To do so is shameful and an act of rebellion. Could such an one wipe the Lord's feet with her hair as the devoted women in Luke 7:38 and John 12:3 did?

Long Hair Not a Covering Our Authorized Version says in 1 Corinthians 11:15, "for her hair is given her for a covering." From this some teach that a woman's long hair is her head-covering and that no other covering is needed. But this phrase is incorrectly translated and does not give the meaning of the original Scripture at all. An altogether different word in Greek is used here from the one correctly translated "covered" in 1 Corinthians 11:6. There the word is "katakaluptespho" and means "to cover up, covering one's head." Here in 1 Corinthians 11:15 the word is "peribolaion" and means "that which is thrown around" (Liddell and Scott Lexicon).

Thus the New Translation correctly renders this phrase "for the long hair is given (to her) in lieu of a veil." That is, long hair is given to a woman by nature as a veil cast around her. It is not the covering for her head which the apostle is insisting on in the foregoing verses. If man's glory is to be covered in the presence of God, as we have previously explained, then surely woman's long hair which is her personal glory, must be covered in His presence also.

First Paul sets forth the difference between man and woman and says that man should have his head uncovered and woman should have her's covered. Then he further appeals to the sense of propriety and comeliness, based on the different constitution of man and woman by nature, as another reason why she should have her head covered and appear different from man before God. "Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you?" (1 Corinthians 11:13-14). Even in nature God has given woman long hair as a veil to conceal herself. That which is becoming to a woman, then, is to cover her head when she prays to God. No Such Custom

"If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God" (1 Corinthians 11:16). The apostle had declared the mind of God in this matter and if any were going to contend about it and argue, he simply adds, "We have no such custom, neither the churches of God." It is often in little things like this of covering or uncovering one's head that the state of heart is manifested and a test given as to whether one's will is subject to God and His Word or whether it desires instead to go against the Word and according to the fashions and order of the day. Customs may change, but the principle of God's Word in this and other matters abides.

Examples from Scripture No Public Position-We have seen from various passages in the Bible that woman's place in the Church is not a public one but rather the private sphere of manifold activities for her Lord and Savior. As we have been considering what women are not permitted to do, let us observe from Scripture the various positions or offices which were not given to them. The sixty-six books in the Bible were all written by men. Not one woman was chosen of God to write any part of the Scriptures. No woman was appointed as a Levite or priest to serve in the tabernacle or temple in the Old Testament. No woman was chosen by the Lord as one of the twelve apostles; all were men. In addition to the twelve apostles, seventy were sent out by the Lord. Of these we are not told that any of them were women. There were "seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom," chosen in Acts 6:1-15 to serve tables and look after the widows. Not one woman was chosen.

There were many witnesses mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 to prove the resurrection of the Lord. Names of individual men are given, but there is no mention there of a single woman. This is very significant, as Mary was the first individual to see Christ risen and was sent by Him with a wonderful message to the disciples. Here, however, her name is omitted from the list of witnesses. Is not this a strong proof that Scriptures does not give women a place of public testimony?

Bishops, deacons, and elders were appointed in the early Church and described in I Timothy and in Titus. They were all men; no woman was among the number. We read of no woman evangelist, pastor, or teacher in a public sense in the New Testament. No woman is named as performing a public miracle. There are two witnesses in Revelation 11:1-19. They are prophets, not prophetesses or a prophet and a prophetess; both are men.

Surely the absence of women in these various public positions would show us that such is not her sphere of activity. We shall now pass on to the positive examples in Scripture of godly women and their acceptable service for God.

Miriam In Exodus 15:20 we read: "Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord," etc. This was a good service. She led the women in a song of praise to the Lord; she did not seek to lead the men. Here her service was quite acceptable, but later on when she led Aaron in complaining about Moses, she was stricken with leprosy for her sin (Numbers 12:1-16).

Women of Exodus 35:22-26 In connection with the building of the tabernacle, we read that women came with men, who were willing hearted, "and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold ... an offering of gold unto the Lord." "And all the women that were wise hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun goat's hair." Thus they had a wonderful part in the building of the sanctuary for God.

Deborah

She was a prophetess, a married woman, and judged Israel in a day of declension (Judges 4:1-24). Israel was in a very low condition and Deborah was raised up, when the courage of man had utterly failed, to break the yoke of foreign oppression. It is in times of declension that woman comes forward and it is a sign of the low condition of things. However, we must notice that even Deborah sought to keep her proper place. She dwelt under the palm tree and Israel came up to her for judgment. She called Barak and told him to go forth against Sisera's armies as the Lord had commanded. When Barak would not go forth without Deborah she consented to go along with him, but told him the journey would not be for his honor for the Lord would sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. Her words would indicate that if it was a matter of shame for Barak that a woman should slay Sisera, it was not less a matter of shame that a woman should be forced by the men's backwardness to judge Israel. Her faith and courage inspired and helped Barak who was evidently a timid man. Thus sisters can help timid brethren. Deborah did not lead Barak, but went with him and encouraged him on. The Woman of Shunem

We read in 2 Kings 4:8-37 of this "great woman," where her special care and hospitality toward the prophet Elisha is spoken of. She suggested to her husband that they make a special chamber for

the prophet, where he could "turn in" any time he came along that way. Her faith and confidence is noted too.

New Testament Women In two great respects God has honored the woman beyond the man in the New Testament. (1) Christ was born of a woman, the virgin Mary. (2) The Lord, after His resurrection, appeared first to a woman, Mary Magdalene. These two women have a wonderful place in connection with the Lord. Mary was spoken of as "highly favored" and "blessed among women," and Mary Magdalene is noted for her affection for the Lord and was privileged to carry a wonderful message from the risen Lord to the disciples.

Anna, the prophetess, "served God with fastings and prayers night and day ... and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:37-38). Such service is open to any sister today and is much needed.

Luke 8:2-3 speaks of certain women, who were healed of evil spirits and infirmities, as being with the twelve who followed the Lord, and that they "ministered unto him of their substance." This was a blessed service indeed.

Martha received the Lord into her house and served Him, while her sister Mary sat at His feet to receive His words. Another time they "made him a supper" and Mary anointed Him with costly ointment for His burial (Luke 10:38-39; John 12:1-3). In connection with the death of the Lord, we read of "a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him." And afterwards they followed on and "beheld the sepulchre, and how His body was laid" (Luke 23:27; Luke 23:55). Then upon the first day of the week they came early in the morning to the sepulchre with the spices and ointments which they had prepared for the body of the Lord. Such was the devoted service of women towards the Lord in life and death. Personal, loving devotedness shines out here as the special service of sisters. In Acts 9:36-39 we read of Dorcas who was full of good works and alms deeds. Upon her death, the widows came weeping and showed the coats and garments which she had made for them. What a blessed service she rendered unto the poor. In Acts 12:12 we learn that Mary the mother of John Mark had opened her home for a prayer-meeting, and in Acts 16:133 we see women gathered together for prayer at a river side. We also see Lydia opening her home to the apostle Paul and those with him (Acts 16:15).

Among the many names cited for personal commendation in Romans 16:1-27, are found those of various women. Phebe was a servant of the Church at Cenchrea and had been a succorer of many. Priscilla and her husband Aquila were Paul's helpers in Christ and laid down their necks for his life. Now at Rome their home was evidently the meeting place of the Assembly, for Paul says, "greet the church that is in their house." Mary also had bestowed much labor upon Paul and those with him. When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he asked that they "help those women which labored with me in the gospel" (Php 4:3). That they did not preach with Paul, we may be sure from what he wrote elsewhere, but they were identified with him in the trials and conflicts of the Gospel. They helped him in every possible way, perhaps opening their homes for the Gospel, exercising hospitality, seeking out souls, praying with them, inviting them to hear the Gospel, and in many things that women can do a great deal better than men. Paul valued such service of women and spoke of them as laboring with him in the Gospel. How blessed! Such valuable service in the Gospel is still open to women today. They can sing the Gospel and thus help in open air meetings and wherever the Gospel is proclaimed. They can visit the sick and give out Gospel tracts, too.

What a great field is open to women in which to serve the Lord. The foregoing examples of acceptable service by various women of old should encourage sisters to labor diligently for the Lord. Their work is just as important as the public service of men. It is remembered by the Lord and will be rewarded by Him.

Surely, then, from what has been before us, we must conclude from the Scriptures that woman's place in the Church is quite distinctive from that of man and that it is not Scriptural for woman to do that which is definitely man's work. Sometimes Galatians 3:28 is quoted to prove the contrary. "There is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." This verse, however, is not speaking about conduct and order in the Church, but is a statement concerning the redeemed family of God. In that family there is no difference, as regards salvation and grace, between Jew and Greek, bond and free, male and female. From other passages we have seen that God's order in creation still abides in the Church.

Adornment and Dress

Before closing our subject of "Woman's Place in the Church," we feel constrained, to add a few remarks as to the important matter of her adornment and dress. God has also given us instructions as to this in His Word and the widespread, shameful, present day departure of women in general from these Scriptural injunctions necessitates that attention be drawn to what God has said on the subject. In 1 Timothy 2:9-10 we read: "that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair (plaited hair -New Trans.), or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works."

Many women, even some sisters in the Lord, are following the styles of the world as to their dress and adornment and are found with short dresses, dresses with low necks, no sleeves and bare backs, slacks, shorts, painted faces and nails, bobbed hair, gaudy garments, and most immodest bathing suits. Beloved sisters, are these things in accordance with the above Scripture? Is it modest apparel? Would shamefacedness, sobriety, and that which becometh women professing godliness, characterize such things? Assuredly not. Never were the fashions in so-called Christian lands so degrading to women, immodest, and conducive to the stirring up of baser lusts and sin. The testimony of one young man about women's present day dress is: "It is the clothing that neither reveals, nor conceals, that brings the imagination into play and does the havoc: why don't girls wear enough to cover themselves?"

Dr. Perry M. Lichenstein, former physician of Tombs Prison in New York City, who is in a position to speak authoritatively on the causes of crime, has said the following: "The so-called crimes of passion are increasing alarmingly, and will continue to do so, in my opinion, until the principal cause is eliminated. This, it seems to me, is the present style of dress, which to say the least, is immodest. Rolled stockings and similar styles have a direct bearing upon crime incitation, no matter how innocent the wearer may be.

"And even if immodest clothing does not always lead to serious crime, it certainly offers a very direct and suggestive appeal to sex, and stimulates those baser impulses which slumber in the human breast. It is certainly safe to say that there would be much less crime today, far fewer homes whose happiness has been blasted forever by unfaithfulness, fewer divorce trials, and especially less violations of maidenly honor, and far fewer transgressions of the sins of chastity, if

every one of these underworld styles could be thrown into the deepest hell, where they were conceived. Remember, the girl who dresses in an alluring way cannot condemn anyone but herself if the lure of her dress brings her the treatment which is usually accorded to women of questionable morals." The foregoing by Dr. Lichenstein was written many years ago. Today, as this book is prepared for a second edition in 1973, moral conditions in the world have greatly degenerated. The shameful lack of proper adornment among women has become increasingly worse. With the widespread use of the miniskirt and the exposure of the female form in sexual appeal, crimes and attacks against women have greatly increased. As skirts began creeping upward in 1964, the rate of forcible rape crimes increased each year after a previous five year decline. In five recent years in the U.S., the increase in rape rate was 68%. In England the increase in sex crimes * during the same period was 90%.

God hates exposure of the sex-related parts of the human body. When the prophet Isaiah warned Babylon of coming judgment, he foretold how God would strip her naked and so expose her shame before the nations. "Make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the river. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea thy shame shall be seen. I will take vengeance" (Isaiah 47:1-3). Modern women are thus uncovering themselves to their own utter contempt and so exposing their shame, even in assemblies of Christians. The Laodicean Church is counseled to buy "white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear" (Revelation 3:18). While this is spoken in a spiritual sense, it would seem that it is also needful for these words to be spoken literally to many today. The first thing that Adam and Eve did after they had sinned was to make coverings for their nakedness. Now mankind seems to delight in uncovering as much as possible of their nakedness. And what a sad thing it is to see that women seem to be the leaders and the greatest offenders in this dreadful thing. How true are the words of Zephaniah 3:5 : "the unjust knoweth no shame."

Beloved sisters, let us heed Romans 12:2 : "be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." May we also remember 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 : "know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

R. K. Campbell

Chapter 37

02.25. Chapter 3 ITS LOCAL ASPECT - Assembly Discipline

Chapter 3 ITS LOCAL ASPECT Assembly Discipline

02.26. Discipline - its Necessity

Discipline - its Necessity In chapter one we spoke of the Church as being the house of God on earth and pointed out that order and responsibility were the principle thoughts connected with this figure of the Church. We further saw that God is a God of order and that if He dwells in a house, as He does in His Church, that house must be according to His mind and His order. Therefore, since "holiness becometh thine house, O Lord" (Psalms 93:5), it is our responsibility to keep the Assembly, His dwelling place, pure and holy. In 1 Timothy 3:14-15 we read: "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." This was the reason for Paul's writing this Epistle to Timothy-that he and we might know how to behave ourselves in the house of God. We thus learn that there must be a becoming behavior in God's house and that order, holiness, and discipline must be maintained in His dwelling place.

God's Holiness

Discipline in the Church is a necessity because of the holy and true One (Revelation 3:7) who is in the midst of His people and whose eyes are purer than to behold evil or to look on iniquity (Habakkuk 1:13) . Sin cannot be allowed to go on unjudged or evil tolerated where the holy One has His habitation. His house must be kept clean. Psalms 101:7 declares: "He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight."

It is important to remember as we take up the subject of discipline that it is connected with that aspect of the church presented in Scripture as the house of God. It is not the Church as the Body of Christ that is before us when considering the matter of discipline.

Christ's Authority Maintained In Hebrews 3:6 we read of Christ being "son over his own house; whose house are we." Since Christ is Son over His house, His authority must be maintained and the lawlessness of man shut out. What is agreeable to Him is to be manifested. We have, therefore, to act in the responsibility of maintaining the order of His Word and to keep His house clean. This is the discipline of Christ as Son over His house. It is ecclesiastical in character-Assembly discipline. The discipline of the Father is that of fatherly care for a child. It is the exercise of individual love and grace flowing from the Father's love towards an erring child. This is the the Father's care over His family and is quite distinct from the Son exercising discipline over His house.

Discipline means subjection to rule, development of the habit of obedience by training and instruction, correction, and chastisement. It is the educative training of the disciple. This is what is necessary in the home, in the school, in government, and likewise in the house of God. No institution can prosper or succeed without such discipline.

If there is not the maintenance of discipline and godly order in the Assembly, it will soon be evident that the lack of it hinders the operation of the Holy Spirit and quenches His ministry. The Spirit of

God is grieved by all that dishonors Christ and is contrary to His Word. He cannot bless disobedience, self-will, or unjudged sin. So spiritual dearth and lack of power in the Assembly are sure to follow the neglect of discipline which should be exercised for the honor and glory of the Lord, whose house we are.

Leavening Character of Sin

Another reason for the necessity of discipline in the Assembly is the fact that sin is like leaven which leavens the whole lump. The apostle speaks of this in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened." The nature of leaven is such that even a small particle of it will spread, leavening the whole lump. The only way to stop its leavening effect is to purge it out or to bake it in an oven thus arresting its action. Likewise sin will spread in an Assembly and leaven the whole gathering if it is not judged and purged out. Sin is defiling. It must be judged wherever it manifests itself, otherwise it will become diffused and corrupt the whole company.

Thus godly discipline is necessary to arrest the defiling effect of sin in the Assembly, thereby keeping it clean and unleavened. If one in whose heart the leaven of sin is working does not yield to instruction, pleading, warning, reproof, and godly care and judge himself, but persists in his course, the Assembly must, after due time and effort to deliver him, purge out that leavened person by putting him or her away as an evil person so that the gathering will not become leavened by this defiled one. But we must not think of discipline as being merely a deliberative and judicial act whereby one is excommunicated-put out of the Assembly. The great purpose of discipline should ever be to prevent the necessity of putting one away from the fellowship of believers. Nine tenths of the discipline which should go on in an Assembly ought to be individual in character, the exercise of pastoral care, and not that of the whole Church acting in judgment. All discipline should have correction and restoration as its aim. The extreme act of putting one outside the Assembly is not, properly speaking, discipline.

It is an admission that discipline has been ineffective and that no more can be done except to put such an one in the outside place as a wicked person. The Church has then nothing more to say to such an one, unless there is repentance and restoration to the Lord.

It is within the Assembly that discipline in its various forms is maintained and exercised to the glory of God and to the blessing of souls (1 Corinthians 5:12). Thus saints are led in the paths of obedience, trained in the ways of the Lord, and educated in that which is pleasing to Christ and becoming to saints. Truly, then, in view of what has been before us, it is imperative that discipline according to God's Word be maintained in the Assembly -the house of God.

02.27. Object of Discipline

Object of Discipline

1. Maintenance of God's Glory - Surely our first concern in the matter of discipline in the Assembly should be the maintenance of the glory of God and the honor of His holy name. He dwells in the Assembly and if evil is tolerated there, the holy name of Christ is thereby linked with it and that precious and hallowed name dishonored. The Assembly must be kept as a fit place for His holy presence and His glory and honor must be maintained by judging every form of sin and evil that manifests itself. This should indeed be the first object of Assembly discipline. By correcting the erring one and judging evil, His holy name is cleared before the world and His glory and honor maintained. An Assembly which refuses to judge evil in doctrine or morals is not an Assembly of God at all, but a disgrace and dishonor to His holy name.

2. Clearing of Assembly - Closely connected with the foregoing would be the clearing of the Assembly before the eyes of the world by discipline and judgment of evil. We are to shine as lights in the world, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16). We have a testimony to maintain in this scene and the world watches the conduct of those associated with God's Assembly. When a believer falls into sin and evil the Lord's name is dishonored and the testimony of the Assembly is brought into disrepute. But if such evil is judged and discipline executed upon the guilty one, the testimony of the gathering is maintained in the eyes of the world in spite of the dishonor. For when it is seen that evil-doers are excommunicated and not fellowshiped in the Assembly, the respect of the world for the Church is retained and the gathering is publicly cleared of the evil which sprang up in its midst. The holiness of the name of the Lord, which is connected with the Assembly, is vindicated.

After the Corinthians had acted in discipline and put away the wicked one from the Assembly, Paul could write them, "In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter" (2 Corinthians 7:11) .

If another is going on carelessly in a lesser degree and is corrected in discipline and his walk thereby improved, this is also noticed by the world. The Lord's name is glorified thereby and a good testimony goes forth from the Assembly. All this is an important and necessary object of discipline in the gathering of believers.

3. Correction of Offender - Another purpose of discipline is to correct the offender and to teach him what he ought to have learned from the Word of God. God has given us His Word and we are responsible to read it and to learn, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, what is His mind concerning our walk and behavior. The Scriptures are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). But if a believer becomes careless and does not heed God's Word, but walks contrary to it, he is awakened from his careless and sleepy condition and made to realize what he should have learned from God's Word and what his walk should be by the discipline exercised in the Assembly upon him. Thus by discipline saints are

trained in the ways of the Lord and taught obedience to His Word.

4. Profit and Restoration of Souls - As already stated, the great purpose of discipline is that the erring one may be corrected and restored to communion with the Lord and with His people. Discipline in all its varied aspects should ever have as its object the correction and blessing of its subjects. This is God's purpose in chastening His children. Hebrews 12:10-11 says it is "for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness," and that it might yield to the exercised soul "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." So the Assembly should ever seek the profit and spiritual good of souls in the exercise of discipline. It may be instructive to the soul, preventive, corrective, or punitive, but is always profitable to the heart exercised thereby.

It is important to see that even when it comes to the severest act of discipline the act of excommunication from the Assembly and the cessation of discipline-the purpose of it, the apostle says, is that the flesh which caused the odious sin may be destroyed, broken down, "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:5). This is very precious and noteworthy and is the blessed result which we should ever have in mind and for which we should always look in exercising discipline. No other purpose than this should be in our hearts.

We should never put away evil-doers in order to get rid of a disgrace or to be done with a troublesome person who may have caused much sorrow and greatly tried the saints. Neither should there be the thought of executing vengeance upon a wrong-doer, but rather there should be deep sorrow that such discipline is necessary. And the one put away should be followed with much prayer, that the discipline might have the effect upon him of causing him to cease his wrong-doing and be restored to the Lord and to the communion of saints. This blessed result is seen in the man whom the Corinthians had to put away from among themselves as a wicked person. In his second Epistle to them the apostle says that the punishment inflicted upon him was sufficient and that they should forgive him and comfort him and confirm their love to him, lest he be overwhelmed with overmuch sorrow (2 Corinthians 2:6-8). The desired purpose of excommunication had been accomplished. He was now broken down, repentant, restored to the Lord, and ready to be forgiven and restored to the fellowship of the Assembly. Blessed result of discipline which we should ever aim and pray for!

02.28. Manner of Exercising It

Manner of Exercising It

We come now to a most important aspect of our subject - the spirit and manner in which discipline is to be administered. The Assembly is not a mere court of justice where a judicial process goes on for the trial of wrongs by certain laws. To act thus is to go entirely off the ground of grace upon which we stand before God.

Remember What We Are - As another has well said: "We ought to remember what we are in ourselves, when we talk about exercising discipline it is an amazingly solemn thing. When I reflect, that I am a poor sinner saved by mere mercy, standing only in Jesus Christ for acceptance, in myself vile, it is, evidently, an awful thing to take discipline into my own hands. Who can judge save God? This is my first thought.

"Here I stand, as nothing, in the midst of persons dear to the Lord, whom I must look upon and esteem better than myself, in the consciousness of my own sinfulness and nothingness before the Lord; and to talk of exercising discipline!-it is a very solemn thought. Indeed to my mind; it presses on me peculiarly. Only one thing gets me out of that feeling, and that is the prerogative of love. When love is really in exercise, it cares for nothing but the accomplishment of its object . . . Though the subject-matter of conduct be righteousness, that which sets it going is love-love in exercise, to secure, at all cost of pain to itself, the blessing of holiness in the church. It is not a position of superiority in the flesh" (J. N. D.).

Galatians 6:1 instructs us: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." It is in a spirit of meekness that the erring one is to be dealt with and not in any spirit of being better than he. Notice that the aim is noted here as restoration.

Mourning and Identification - When Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the evil that was in their midst, unjudged, he reprovved them because they were puffed up and had not rather mourned, that he that had done this deed might have been taken away from among them (1 Corinthians 5:2). Thus we see that mourning and deep heart exercise should be the attitude of the Assembly when one must be put away as a wicked person unfit for fellowship. Instead of acting in a cold, judicial, Pharisaical way there should be sorrow, humility, and confession of common sin and shame that such a thing has happened in God's house. There may even be occasion for self-reproach that it has had to come to this extreme act of cutting off. Had the erring one been looked after enough? Had he been prayed for? Had a godly example been set him? Had true shepherd care been exercised toward him? All these questions will surely arise in hearts truly realizing the shame of the case.

Furthermore, instead of looking at the evil as that of the erring individual, the Assembly must take it up as their sin and in confession of common sin and shame. Paul wrote the Corinthians, "ye . . . have not rather mourned." It was their sin; they were all identified with it as a whole family is with

the shame of one of its members. So one has written: "The Assembly is never prepared, or in the place to exercise discipline, unless having first identified itself with the sin of the individual. If it does not do it in that way, it takes a judicial form, which will not be the administration of the grace of Christ ... The Church is never in the place of exercising discipline until the sin of the individual becomes the sin of the Church, recognized as such-I do not think any person or body of Christians can exercise discipline, unless as having the conscience clear, as having felt the power of the evil and sin before God, as if he had himself committed it. Then he does it as needful to purge himself" (J. N. D.). In the Old Testament the priests were to eat the sin offering of the people in the holy place (Leviticus 10:17-18). They were to bear the iniquity of the congregation and to make atonement for them. This typifies for us priestly intercession, making the sin of another our own and pleading with the Father, as a priest, that the dishonor done to Christ's body, of which we are members, might be remedied. This is the spirit in which discipline is to be exercised. When the apostle wrote sternly to the Corinthians commanding them to put away the wicked person from their midst, he said it was "out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears" (2 Corinthians 2:4). This is the only right spirit in which to exercise discipline.

02.29. Its Various Forms

Its Various Forms

Thus far we have had before us the necessity of discipline, the object of it, and the spirit and manner in which it is to be administered in the Assembly. With this preface, we may now consider the matter of discipline itself as it is presented to us in Scripture.

We shall find that there are various forms or phases of discipline which should go on in the Assembly. Discipline embraces a great deal. In its broad sense it covers the order and government which belongs to God's house. By this term is meant the general exercise of care in the government of His house. It takes in, in this way, the various forms in which that care manifests itself from the simplest forms of brotherly interest and advice to the more public correction and reproof in the Assembly, sometimes resulting in the necessary act of putting away from the Assembly a wicked person.

Discipline must not be thought of as merely an act of the Assembly. It is much more than that. It embraces the instructing of souls in the ways of God, correction, training in obedience, subjection to rule, and all phases of pastoral dealing with souls. The majority of cases of discipline which should be handled in an Assembly should be of a private nature, exercised by overseers and pastoral in character. The exercise of such watchful, shepherd care for the sheep, feeding, guarding, leading, correcting, and reproving in love, is a most important phase of discipline and will often have the result of rendering more severe forms of discipline unnecessary. It is of the utmost importance, then, that such care be exercised in the Assembly. Discipline begins with this.

It is quite evident that there is a great variation and difference in the offenses that may be committed in the house of God. Some are more serious than others and require a severer form of discipline, while others call for a lesser form. Hence the Word of God gives us various forms or degrees of discipline which are to be exercised in the Assembly. Each case must be dealt with upon its own merits and spiritual discernment is needed to ascertain under what class of discipline the offense would properly come. With this general word, we pass on to specific forms of discipline.

1. Restoration When Overtaken in a Fault

Galatians 6:1 gives the general instruction, that "if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." While this may refer in general to any case of sin where the work of restoration is needed, we may also take it as applying to a class of failures where this individual restorative dealing with the soul is all that is required in the way of discipline. This form of discipline would be that exercise of watchful, shepherd care for souls which we were previously speaking of. The original word, rendered "fault" in the above passage, means "falling from the right way," and is elsewhere translated "trespass," "offense," and "sin." The word rendered "overtaken" has the thought of "to take or seize beforehand." Thus the passage literally means, "one surprised, seized or caught by a sin or trespass." The word translated "restore" in the

original means "to make thoroughly right, or bring into line." It is else where translated "mend" and "joined together." In medical language it is used of setting a bone or joint.

Thus we learn the nature of the case supposed, the labor of love it calls for, and the result that should be the aim. One has been seized and caught by a trespass and falls into sin through lack of watchfulness and dependence upon God. This state calls for tenderness and gracious handling. The evil must be dealt with in a spirit of meekness and the soul led to judge both it and the root cause of carelessness, self-confidence, or neglect of spiritual exercises which made possible the fall. A visit is needed, a kindly talk, and the prayerful application of the Word to the erring one, as water to the feet by the Lord in John 13:5-14. When restoration or mending of the wounded soul is the object, and when all is done in meekness by one who is spiritual and who has a deep sense of his own weakness, confession and restoration of soul will most likely follow in the majority of cases. It may not take place at once, so more than one visit and much prayer may be required. If the failure is confessed and judged and the soul restored to the Lord, the matter is settled and others need not know of it. But if the soul does not yield to the Word nor confess its wrong and is not restored, another form of discipline may be required.

2. Warning and Withdrawing from Those Walking Disorderly In 1 Thessalonians 5:14 we read, "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly." If one is not submissive to rule and the Scriptural order of the Assembly, but is disobedient to God's Word, going on in self-will and disorder, he is an unruly person and must be warned by the brethren who care for souls in the Assembly. Such an one is in a carnal state of soul and is unaware of what his unruly conduct will lead him to; but this is evident to the Assembly's watchmen who are responsible to sound the note of warning in, order that the serious consequences which will follow such a course may be avoided. As brethren in Christ we are to be "full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another" (Romans 15:14). A spiritually minded brother is a man of vision and discernment, able to warn of coming trouble. When believers are not acting according to godly order, it is the responsibility of such in the Assembly whom God has raised up as overseers to warn the unruly, showing them what will be the result of their present course and admonishing them to change their ways and act in submission to God's Word. Such a warning may be given by individual brothers or in behalf of the oversight of the Assembly. The results are left with God, entreating Him in prayer to use the warning and admonition for the blessing of the one concerned.

If the warning is not heeded a further step of discipline is needed. This next step is stated in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 : "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." One walking disorderly, or "out of rank," as the term implies, and who does not heed the warnings and admonitions given him is now to be withdrawn from. In 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 the apostle further adds: "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." A believer walking contrary to the Word of God is walking in disorder and is to be marked out and isolated that he may be made to feel his wrong and be ashamed of His course. All social intercourse with such is to be withheld and no expression of fellowship with him is to be granted. The Assembly is not to shake hands with him, even though he is still permitted to the fellowship of the Lord's Table. There is not as yet sufficient grounds to put such an one away from the Assembly as a wicked person. This discipline of withdrawal is corrective in

purpose, that the disorderly one might thereby be broken down in his course, restored to the Lord, and retain his place at the Lord's Table. He is not to be counted as an enemy, but is to be admonished as a brother. However, if there is not repentance and a change in walk such a case may end in excommunication. The special form of disorderly walk that was found among the Thessalonians was idleness and going about as busybodies. "We hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies" (2 Thessalonians 3:11) . They were probably "living off" the saints and not working for their own living. Being idle, they occupied themselves with others' affairs and became tattlers. 1 Timothy 5:13 also warns of young widows falling into this: "they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not." An idle person can soon become a tool in Satan's hand to spread trouble among believers by meddling in others' affairs and spreading gossip. Assemblies are often in turmoil and difficulty because of idle busybodies and tattlers. Such are walking in a disorderly manner and are to be warned and withdrawn from if they do not change their course. But the above is not the only form of disorderly walk. Such a walk may show itself in the associations formed, the company kept, the places visited, etc., by which there is in evidence a manner of life not according to the Gospel of Christ and His Word. A general principle is given us here in Thessalonians which covers all cases of disorderly walk and instructs us as to the form of discipline to be enacted.

3. Public Rebuke In 1 Timothy 5:20 the apostle instructs Timothy: "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." Here we have a more serious form of discipline than the private warning and admonition which we were last considering. This Scripture applies to cases of sin which are of such a nature that a public rebuke in the Assembly is necessary. The passage is literally, "Them that are sinning (present participle, i. e., those found going on in a sinful course) convict, or put to shame before all." The sinning here is of such a character that it affects the public testimony of the gathering and a public rebuke is necessary to clear the Assembly and convict the offender.

It may be a case of one who is not subject to private admonition. It has now gone beyond being a matter of simple private admonition. The evil has grown to such a character that it is plain to all that the public testimony of the Assembly is injured and that there is need of more strenuous discipline if the wrong-doer is to be convicted and restored. A public rebuke is thus administered to the erring one in the presence of the whole Assembly that he may be convicted, put to shame, and delivered from the error of his way.

There may also be a case of one mixed up with a street brawl or of one beating his wife in public or a public shame of some kind-all contrary to the Word of God. It was done in public and must be rebuked in public. Of course, facts must be established and the thing certain. No action in discipline is ever to be taken on mere "hear-say." A Scriptural example of a brother rebuked publicly in an assembly of saints is found in Galatians 2:11-14. Here is the record of the apostle Paul rebuking the apostle Peter before the saints at Antioch. Peter, by his refusal to eat with the Gentile believers, had gone backward from the liberty of grace to the bondage of the law. Because of this Paul "withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed," and "said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" By Peter's action others were led away with him, even Barnabas, and "walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel." This was

serious and the apostle Paul rightly rebuked Peter publicly for his inconsistency. By doing so he not only corrected the latter's wrong step but also prevented the evil influence from spreading among the others in the Assembly at Antioch who were in danger of being turned away from the pure truth of the Gospel of the grace of God. When any one is publicly rebuked it should be made plain to that one that what he has said or done is contrary to the Scriptures. The offender is to be publicly shown his wrong and corrected of it by a wise and skillful use of the Word of God. The Scriptures used would also enlighten the consciences of all present and preserve them from the same fault.

There should be no display of anger, or any manifestation of a Pharisaic spirit of self-righteousness on the part of the one who administers the rebuke. It should be carried out with a real sense of sorrow and in such a way that the solemn and serious character of such action would be deeply felt and self-judgment produced in the offender as well as fear in all who hear-"that the rest also may have fear" (New Trans.) .

Timothy was further charged, in connection with rebuking those that sinned, to "observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality" (1 Timothy 5:21). He was to rebuke any who merited it, irrespective of age, place, or standing in the Assembly, even an elder. We have no one today, such as Timothy with authority from an apostle, but we have the apostle's words in Scripture and the Assembly is responsible to carry out this injunction without partiality. It is to be done by an individual, preferably an older brother of good report and generally after counsel with responsible brethren in the gathering.

Such public rebuking of those that are sinning is not often seen in the Assemblies of saints today, but we believe that if there were more of it practiced we would see more godly fear in the hearts of believers and more carefulness of walk. We would also see fewer cases of excommunication from the Assembly because the erring ones would be rebuked and arrested in the beginning of their pathway of sin. May this healthful, faithful form of discipline not be neglected in the Church, but be used when necessary. We may also think of Paul's words to Titus in connection with this phase of discipline: "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee" (Titus 2:15).

4. Dealing With a Heretic

Titus 3:10-11 gives us the form of discipline that is to be exercised toward one that is a heretic. "An heretical man after a first and second admonition have done with, knowing that such a one is perverted, and sins, being self-condemned" (New Trans.). The word for heretic in the Greek means "a choice, course of action or thought, opinionated." One who chooses his own course of thought and is self-opinionated is a heretic. In self-will he presses his own opinions and showy teachings and forms a sect or party of those who support his views. This brings in the serious danger of division in the Assembly. A heretic may be sound on fundamental doctrine and yet form a party around himself by his self-chosen opinions and peculiar views.

Heresy in church history is something contrary to the orthodox faith, but the real meaning of the word "heresy" is self-will. Wherever it works its direct tendency is to produce a sect or schism in the Assembly.

Such an one is to be admonished once and twice. He is thus reminded of the seriousness of his sin and warned of the grave consequences. If the double warning of his heretical and party-producing behavior is not heeded, he is to be shunned and "done with." By repeated refusal to yield to admonitions he manifests his real state. He is perverted, turned away from the right, and sins. A spiritual pride is manifested and he is self-condemned. His unfitness for fellowship is apparent and he is to be refused as a sect-maker.

It may be supposed that such a man would go out of the Assembly because he could not impose his own will and way upon it. There is no mention here of putting him out of the Assembly as a wicked person. Perhaps because this Epistle of Titus was written to an individual. If people do not listen to him and he is shunned, the result will undoubtedly be (if he persists in his course) that he will eventually go out of his own accord. This form of discipline will either break down his self-will or further manifest his spirit as he withdraws from the gathering. Should he remain in the Assembly, he should certainly be put under public rebuke, silenced as to any public activity in the gathering, and no company be kept with him. The case may develop into that of a wicked person and necessitate his being put away as such according to 1 Corinthians 5:13.

Marking and Avoiding Division Makers - Closely connected with the above instruction as to a heretical man is the injunction in Romans 16:17-18 regarding makers of division. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." This is what a heretical man will do. He seeks to gather around himself those who will support him in his opinions. The result is that schism made within leads to outward division. The discontented go out that they may have their own way. Those who separate themselves from their brethren to follow their own opinions or form of teaching are makers of division and are to be marked and avoided; we are to turn away from them. This is the force of the word "avoid" in the original. In Paul's day there were probably those who had created division elsewhere. Should they come to Rome, the apostle instructs the Christians there to mark them and to keep away from them, for they serve not the Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly (their own gain), and deceive the simple. The Christian is told to depart from iniquity, but making division by insisting on one's own opinions is contrary to the doctrine we have learned from Scripture. There we are taught to endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). Therefore only when righteousness, truth, and holiness can be maintained in no other way than by separating from those among whom iniquity is practiced and upheld, is division among professed Christians justified in Scripture (see 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 and 2 Timothy 2:19-22).

5. Discipline of Silence

Having alluded to this in connection with dealing with a heretic, we may now consider this form of discipline of silencing a brother in the Assembly. We will not find a definite Scriptural injunction for this, as we have had for previous forms of discipline, but we do find Scriptural principles which guide us as to such discipline.

While the Scriptures teach that there is to be liberty in the Assembly for the Holy Spirit to use whomsoever He will as His mouthpiece for the expression of prayer, praise, or ministry in the gathering (1 Corinthians 12:11), they also teach that there is a corresponding responsibility for

those thus used to conduct themselves in holiness and to the glory and honor of the Lord.

02.30. Fleshly and Unprofitable Ministry

Fleshly and Unprofitable Ministry

Galatians 5:13 reminds us, "ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." Liberty of the Spirit is not to be used as a license for the flesh to act and exalt itself in the Assembly. Mere fleshly activity which is without the power of the Spirit and not unto edification should surely not be allowed in the Church of God; it ought to be silenced. Serving one another in love and not the vaunting of self should be the motive for all ministry. In 1 Corinthians 14:3 we read "he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." 1 Corinthians 14:26 further instructs, "Let all things be done unto edifying," and 1 Corinthians 14:29 enjoins, "let two or three prophets speak and let the others judge" (New Trans.) and 1 Peter 4:11 says, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ."

These Scriptures would indicate that if any one would speak in the Assembly, he should speak as the mouthpiece of God unto edification, exhortation, or comfort and that the object in speaking should be that the hearers might be built up and helped in the faith and that God in all things might be glorified. To prophesy and to speak as the oracles of God means more than just ministering truth in an intellectual way. It is bringing that particular truth which God would have to be ministered at the moment home to the hearts and consciences of all in the power of the Spirit.

According to 1 Corinthians 14:29 (quoted above) the Assembly is to judge as to the ministry given and if one's ministry is continually not edifying and is without the power of the Spirit for blessing to the hearers, such an one should be labored with and if there is no change he should be silenced as to giving out the Word. If one has not power from God to set forth the Word of God in a way that is understandable and edifying, it is surely not God's will that he should seek to minister in the Church. The saints are not to be harassed by unprofitable or fleshly ministry. The Assembly is responsible for the ministry and doctrine that is given out in the gathering, so it is duty bound to silence any one that continually ministers what is not Scriptural, profitable, glorifying to God, or of the spirit. The apostle Paul wrote Timothy that he had besought him to remain in Ephesus and to "enjoin some not to teach other doctrines, nor to turn their minds to fables and interminable genealogies, which bring questionings rather than (further) God's dispensation, which is in faith" (1 Timothy 1:3-4, New Trans.). Thus we see that some were warned as to their ministry that it must be sound in the truth and profitable and not taken up with questions which do not edify. If such persisted in giving such troublesome ministry they would manifest self-will and would certainly have to be disciplined and silenced. Such ministry might be the beginning of that which would later manifest such an one to be a heretic.

Paul also wrote Titus of "unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped" (Titus 1:10-11). While this may especially refer to men outside of the Assembly, it gives instruction for within the Church as well. Unruly and vain talkers must have

their mouths stopped, especially in God's Assembly. Pride, vain glory, and selfwill may prompt one to speak, but if there is no power in one's words and souls are not benefited it may be a question whether such an one's motive for speaking is the glory of God and the edification of the hearers. If it is apparent that it is continually only self at work and not the activity of the Holy Spirit, the discipline of silence should be exercised upon such an one by the Assembly.

Blemishes - Leviticus 21:16-23 furnishes us with a Scriptural principle which may find its spiritual application to the activity of Christian priests in the Church and give further enlightenment on our subject.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God. For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous, Or a man that is brokenfooted, or brokenhanded, or crookbackt, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken; No man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire: he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God. He shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy, and of the holy. Only he shall not go in unto the wail, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish; that he profane not my sanctuaries: for I the Lord do sanctify them." A priest with a blemish could not enjoy the full privilege of his place as a priest. Though permitted to eat the bread of his God, he could not go in unto the sanctuary or approach the altar to offer the bread of his God; he could not represent the people in priestly service. If we apply this principle to the Church, we observe that to lead the gathering of believers in prayer, praise, or ministry is an official, representative, priestly service, and the above principle would mean that a believer with a corresponding, spiritual blemish is not to approach God for the people, or speak to the people for God. Though privileged to partake of the Lord's Supper, he is not qualified to be the mouthpiece of the Assembly; "he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God." The physical blemishes mentioned in the above Scriptures would picture spiritual blemishes found amongst Christian priests today. One who is blind cannot see; he lacks spiritual discernment. "He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins" (2 Peter 1:9). A flat nose would indicate one who cannot discern the sweet odor of sacrifice, one who is unable to enter into somewhat of the preciousness of what Christ is to God. A dwarf would speak of stunted spiritual growth. And one who is lame or brokenfooted would typify one whose walk is weak or not good. Such are incapacitated for priestly service in the Assembly. But in Christianity no "blemish" need be permanent, for eating the bread of God, spiritually, will remove defects. As another has said, "Our High Priest can remove all the defects in the members of His family." So there is no necessity for saints to be permanently incapacitated for holy service in the Assembly. The blind can have their eyes opened, the lame can be healed, and the dwarfs can grow up in Christ if they desire to do so. So being silenced in the Assembly need not be permanent.

We may further consider the matter of a priest who is lame or brokenfooted. A believer who does not live a good Christian life or walk according to God's Word has a serious blemish. He is a lame priest and is incapacitated for service. If one that ministers in the Assembly fails seriously in his walk he becomes a lame priest and should be silent in the gathering, for his words will have no moral weight. If God is not glorified in one's walk, how can He be in his ministry? If the glory of

God does not govern one in his everyday life, how can God's glory be his motive for ministering in the Assembly?

Such an one is not walking in communion with God and cannot be used by the Spirit to speak as God's oracle in the Assembly. If he persists in speaking in the Assembly he should be put under the discipline of silence until his walk is corrected and confidence regained.

Isaiah 52:11 contains an important admonition for those who minister in the Church. "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." This must be maintained, God's priests must have clean hearts, tongues, hands, and feet. If not, they cannot minister in the sanctuary. Of old the priests always had to wash their hands and their feet before they went into the tabernacle to serve (Exodus 30:19-20). The need of continual cleansing by the water of the Word is thereby typified.

6. Personal Trespass In Matthew 18:15-18 the Lord has given us instructions as to the proper course to pursue in the matter of a brother trespassing against another believer. He also shows the discipline that is to be enacted toward such an one if all efforts to gain and restore the erring one prove futile. But before taking up the instructions in the above mentioned passage we should notice briefly what the Lord told the disciples in the preceding verses of Matthew 18:1-35.

02.31. Becoming Spirit and Moral Features

Becoming Spirit and Moral Features

Here He shows the moral features and the spirit that suits the subjects of the kingdom of heaven. First, He set a little child in their midst as an example and taught them meekness, humility, littleness in their own eyes, and that true greatness is to humble oneself as a little child. He told them how much He valued a believing little one and what a serious matter it was in His eyes to offend one of these little ones.

He then taught them that they must guard against anything that would be a stumbling block to themselves or to others. The knife of self-judgment must be applied to all that offends in ourselves. Following these words, He illustrated the spirit of saving grace which characterized His mission of coming to save that which was lost. He also told them how the Father values every little one and desires that not one of them should perish.

After seeking to imbue the disciples with the spirit of humility and dependence, and with the spirit of tender love and seeking grace of the Father and Himself, the Lord now applies all this to their practical conduct one towards another. He says, as it were, "I want you now to become the channels of my seeking grace and love in looking after the straying and erring one and in bringing him back to the right path." They were to be severe towards any failure in themselves, but the spirit of gracious consideration for the welfare of others was to characterize them. This is the connection between the verses we will now consider on personal trespasses and the rest of the chapter. With this background, we are ready to examine the Lord's instructions on our subject.

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother" (Matthew 18:15).

First of all, I must be sure that my brother has actually trespassed against me. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee"-it is not if I think he has, or some "hear-say" that he has, but a definite case of one actually wronging another. It is not a case where both parties have wronged each other, but of one alone trespassing against the other. The word for "trespass" in the original Greek has the meaning of "missing the mark, to fail, do wrong, err or sin." The English meaning of the word is that of wilfully violating the rights of another, to pass the bounds of propriety or rectitude in the injury of another, or the violation of a positive law, rule, or custom. The First Step

"Go, reprove him between thee and him alone" (New Trans.). This is what the Lord said should be done as the first step on the part of the one who has been wronged. In comment upon the above, we would quote the fine words of Wm. Kelly:

"Supposing your brother does you wrong, something that may be very hard to bear, perhaps; an evil word, or an unkind action done against you-something that you feel deeply as a real personal trespass against you; the man has done it deliberately, and of course it is a great sin. Nobody knows it but himself and you. What are you to do? At once this great principle is applied, When

you were ruined and far from God, what met your case? Did God wait till you put away your sin? It never would have been done at all. God sent His own Son to seek you, to save you. 'The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.' That is the principle for you to act upon.

"It is not merely that this is the way in which God acted. You belong to God: you are a child of God. Your brother has wronged you; go you to him and seek to set him right. It is the activity of love, which the Lord Jesus now presses upon His disciples. They are to seek the deliverance, in the power of divine love, of those who have wandered from God. It is not the flesh feeling its wrong, and resenting what has been done against itself ... I want you, He says ... to be characterized by grace, going out after that which has sinned against God-grace to seek the man that has gone astray.

"This is a great difficulty, unless the soul is fresh in the love of God, and enjoying what God is for him. How does God feel about the child that has done wrong? It is the loving desire to have him right. When the child is near enough to know the Father's heart, he goes out to do the Father's will. It may have been a wrong done against him, but he does not think about that. It is his brother who has slipped into evil, and he sorrows over him. It is a real desire of heart to have the person righted who had gone astray; and this, too, not in order to vindicate self, but that his soul may be restored to the Lord.

"He could not bear that another should know it It is not here the case of a sin known to a great many, but some personal trespass only known to you two. Go, then, to him and tell him his fault between you and him alone. A thing, no doubt, very contrary to the flesh, which would ever demand that the offender should first come and humble himself, or that would act on the worldly ground of not troubling itself about the man, but let him go from bad to worse. Love seeks the good, even of the one who has done ever so wrong." The course natural to our flesh would be to avoid the offending brother and to say nothing to him about his fault, but to tell it to others, or one might determine to bear the injury in long-suffering and "try to live it down," as people say. This might at first seem the right thing to do and to have the appearance of grace on one's part, but it leaves out the most important matter of consideration-the spiritual condition of my offending brother. Therefore this is not the Lord's way of treating the matter. Besides, staying away from the brother may leave a tinge of bad feeling in my heart. Love does not rest while knowing that the conscience of one's erring brother is defiled. Leviticus 19:17-18 says, "thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people." The Lord does not say, "Go and write him a note." No, He says, "Go, reprove him." To send what I think may be a good and faithful letter may spare one's feelings and suit pride, but it will not work the blessing of restoration like a face to face talk in love. Much mischief has come in among God's people by such letter-writing instead of doing what the Lord instructed in the matter whenever possible. The original word, translated in our common version "tell him his fault," is "elegzon" and means to "cross examine with a view of convincing or refuting, to censure, to bring convincing proof." It is thus translated in other versions as "reprove him" or "shew him his fault." The injunction is to go and prove to him how he has erred and trespassed. This is to be done "between thee and him alone." Yet, alas, is it not all too common to discuss a personal trespass more publicly than this? Often it is passed on from one to another and distorted, and thus finally reaches the ear of the offending one in this round about way. The result, then, is hard feelings and the erring one is caused to drift farther astray, rather than gained and

restored. In our selfishness, it suits us better to tell the story of our grievance to others who may be ready to sympathize with us and tell us how badly we have been treated and the like, than to go and seek to gain the one who has done us an injustice. This is not the spirit of Christ or obedience to God's Word. It is rather only another form of the same flesh that manifested itself in our brother's trespass.

"If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." Love is ever bent on gaining the brother and not on vindicating self. It is not the offender, but "thy brother" that should be the thought before the heart. The Lord had told the disciples of the joy that the shepherd had when he found the straying sheep (Matthew 18:13), showing them that the delight of His heart was the recovery of those going astray. Such should be our purpose and delight too.

But, as another has well written, "This going to `gain' him will necessarily put my own soul through deepest exercises. If, in true love to him, I am set upon his recovery in a righteous way, what godly watchfulness and carefulness will be wrought in me! With what earnestness and fervent desire shall I plead for him before God! When a bird has left his cage any rude hand or discordant voice can drive him further away, but how great the care and caution that is exercised by the one who really desires to bring him back to food and shelter! If my errand to my brother were only to pain him, the task might easily be accomplished without a particle of exercise; but if I am to gain him, then grace must work both in him and in me" (Geo. Cutting).

It is well to notice that nothing is said here about making satisfaction for the wrong done to one. The Lord does not say that "if he hear thee, all thy wrongs shall be put right," but "thou hast gained thy brother." Undoubtedly, if grace really works in his heart, if he is really gained, one of the earliest fruits of it will be a real desire to right the wrong or the injury he was guilty of. But the securing of this is not to be the motive leading one to go to him. Leaving our wrongs with the Lord we are to seek our brother's blessing.

Second Step - If the first step of going alone to a brother and telling him his fault does not restore and gain him, but is fruitless, one is not to give up and take for granted that the erring one is beyond recovery. There is always the possibility that one's manner of dealing with the sinning one may be at fault, so the Lord instructs that another effort must be made to gain the offending brother. A second step is to be taken.

"But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matthew 18:16). This is the next step which is to be pursued in the matter. The erring one is to be visited again with one or two more who are to plead with him about his fault. It would undoubtedly be best that they should do the talking this time and seek to gain him. If he hears them and yields, the matter will be settled and no further step is necessary. But if he does not hear or yield to the pleadings and efforts of the two accompanying brothers, the case becomes more serious and another step must be taken. The case is now not just a matter of one saying this and another that, but of every word established by two or three witnesses.

Third Step - "If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church" (Matthew 18:17). The two efforts to restore the offending brother in a private way having failed, the matter is now to be made public to the Church. It is to be investigated by the Assembly and pronounced upon. The Assembly

warns and entreats this man. If he hears and repents, it is well and he will be restored to the Lord and reconciled with his brother that he trespassed against.

"But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." If he refuses to hear the Assembly, the limit in seeking to restore and gain the erring one is reached and nothing more can be done. He is to be regarded by the offended brother as an heathen man and a publican; that is, you no more acknowledge him in his impenitent state as a Christian. A man who is called a brother in the verse before is like an heathen man and a publican now. A most solemn thing! He has shown a hardness of self-will and a spirit of self-justification. It might have arisen out of a small matter, but his unyielding pride about himself and his own fault is that on which God may pronounce him to be regarded as an heathen man and a publican. The Lord here shows how a great fire may be kindled out of a little spark. The end of this personal trespass might be that the Church is convinced that the man manifests not a trace of Christian life about him.

However, we should notice that Matthew 18:17 does not indicate any action of the Assembly as yet against the man. "If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." While the Assembly may not have acted in the case as yet, the individual trespassed against regards the unrepentant offender as an heathen and a publican.

Fourth Step - The Lord now goes on to speak of binding and loosing by the Assembly of even two or three gathered in His name. This is a fourth step - that of excommunication from the Assembly of the unbending, rebellious trespasser. "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:18-20).

Because the Lord Himself is in the midst of the gathered Assembly, it is responsible to purge itself of evil and is given the authority to bind or loose sins in a governmental way here on earth. The sin of the unrepentant one is bound upon him and he is put out of the Assembly as an evil person. Such an act, accomplished in the fear of the Lord and in His name and according to His Word, is bound in heaven, ratified there. The Assembly is also given the power and authority to loose sins in an administrative way on earth. In connection with this the Lord speaks of the power of united prayer in the next verse. This power the Assembly should use for the restoration of the one they have had to excommunicate from their midst, remembering that the object of all discipline should be the recovery of the erring one. When such an one is repentant and restored to the Lord, the Assembly looses or remits his sin and receives him again.

7. Putting Away Wicked Persons

We shall now consider the extreme form of discipline, or more properly speaking, the act of excommunication from the Assembly of one who fails to respond to all other forms of discipline and has to be put away as a wicked person. We have alluded to this act of putting away several times and have seen that it constitutes the fourth step in dealing with the matter of one who is unrepentant and unyielding in the case of a personal trespass.

Putting away is the most solemn and serious of all disciplinary measures and is only to be enacted as a last resort and when no other form of discipline can be applied. This action of

excommunication from the Assembly cannot be taken by an individual, or by any group of individuals, not even by elders, or by those exercising oversight, but must be the action of the whole Assembly. For instructions as to this extreme discipline we must turn to 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. This chapter deals with the matter of one in the Corinthian Assembly who was guilty of fornication. The whole chapter is instructive and should be studied whenever evil has to be dealt with in the Church. We have already referred to several verses in this chapter in connection with the necessity of discipline and the manner of exercising it, so we shall only quote 1 Corinthians 5:11-13 here.

"Now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

02.32. Wicked Persons

Wicked Persons

It is important to notice that it is wicked persons and only such that are to be put away from the company of believers. "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person." It would be very wrong to put away one who had merely been overtaken in a fault or one that had only committed an offense. In applying this discipline of 1 Corinthians 5:13, the prime necessity for the Assembly is to be sure that the person is really wicked. This must be established and manifest to all. Mere suspicion of evil will not do.

We have seen that there are various forms of discipline for the different offenses committed. These forms of discipline which we have hitherto been considering may be called preventive and corrective discipline. Their purpose is to prevent the erring one from going on in sin and becoming a wicked person and to correct him in his walk. But when one refuses to be corrected and persists in an evil course it becomes wickedness and when wickedness in any form manifests itself in the Assembly it must be severely dealt with to preserve the gathering from being leavened by it. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump" (1 Corinthians 5:6-7). The wicked person must be put away. This is preservative discipline and necessary if the Assembly is to maintain itself in communion with the Lord, the holy and true One.

Putting one away as a wicked person is like cutting off a member of one's body. It is a very painful and grievous thing and only done when there is no hope of saving the member. The amputation is performed to preserve the body from the poison in the diseased member. So putting away an evil person is necessary to prevent the leaven from spreading in the Assembly. But what is wickedness? we may well inquire. The word for "wicked" in Greek is "poneros" and signifies the active exercise of corrupt and unruly desires, not just a single act, but a positive injurious activity of evil, a living in sin. Generally speaking, a wicked person is one who is morally bad and evil in principle and practice. He is characterized by either violence or corruption as in the days of Noah (see Genesis 6:5; Genesis 6:11-13) and is full of bitterness and enmity and viciously bent on doing harm or evil. Wickedness is more a course of conduct than a single act of wrong. It is evidenced by a persistent course of evil in which the will is actively engaged.

Wickedness answers to leprosy in the Old Testament. In this connection a careful study of Leviticus 13:1-59 will give much light on our present subject. We can only touch on it in passing, but would call the reader's attention to this chapter. There we have minute instructions as to how to discern leprosy and how to deal with it. The priest was to patiently investigate anything that bore the symptoms of leprosy. He must look on the scab or bright spot and see if it was deeper than the skin. If it was, he pronounced it leprosy and the man had to be shut up as a leper. If it was not deeper than the skin, he was to shut him up seven days and look on it again. If the case was still uncertain, he was shut up another seven days and examined again. Then, if the scab was spreading, he was finally pronounced unclean and a leper.

All this emphasizes the priestly care, patient observation, and godly discernment that is needed before one can be pronounced a wicked person. Note the oft recurrence in this chapter of the words "shall look," "shut up," "see him," and "shall consider." There must be no undue haste or mere assumption in judging.

If one had a white rising in his skin and there was quick raw flesh under it, it was clear that it was leprosy and the man was pronounced unclean. It was something deeper than the skin and not just a mere sudden outburst of nature, but the deep seated disease of leprosy which shuts one out from God's presence. So it is with sin and wickedness. Sin dwells within the believer and if one is not watchful and walking in self-judgment, it will show itself in a sudden outburst of temper, in rash hasty speech, or in being overtaken in some fault. This is like a rising in one's skin or like a burning boil, which is spoken of in Leviticus 13:2; Leviticus 13:23. These sad manifestations of the flesh are not leprosy or wickedness, though leprosy or wickedness might develop out of them. But such outbursts of our evil nature need to be judged and watched, lest they spread and become like a sore deeper than the skin. If indwelling sin is allowed to work in a believer, it may soon become deep seated and develop into wickedness-something deeper than just an outburst of nature, something on the surface. It may develop into a real case of wickedness and become like "quick raw flesh in the rising," which was a sign of real leprosy in Leviticus 13:10-11.

Returning to 1 Corinthians 5:11, we find therein six characters of moral wickedness. "If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." Here are some characteristic examples of what marks one out as a wicked person. A fornicator is one who is morally corrupt and living in immorality*. Such an one is not fit for the fellowship of saints. A covetous person is one who is greedy of gain and actively seeking to grasp what he has not and desiring to take away what another possesses. Covetousness is an unlawful desire to possess oneself of something in opposition to good morals. "Greedy unsatisfied lust" or "unbridled lust" is a good rendering of the word "covetousness." (See Ephesians 5:3 and Colossians 3:5, New Trans.). One whose course of conduct is characterized by such unbridled desires and lust for that which does not rightly belong to him, should be put away as a wicked person. Covetousness is idolatry according to Colossians 3:5.

* When Potiphar's wife desired Joseph to lie with her and commit fornication, he replied, "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9) One act of fornication or adultery was great wickedness to Joseph and is such before God. It begins with lusting after another and committing adultery in the heart, (Matthew 5:28) and then the actual sin follows. An idolater is one who pays divine honors to idols or images, or one who pays excessive veneration or love to any human person or thing. A railer is an abusive person, one who is quarrelsome, insolent, noisy, manifesting temper, and who attacks others with vile slander and abusive language. As another has said, "The habit of evil speaking stamps him who practices it as a railer; and such a man is unfit for the company of saints, for God's Assembly" (W. Kelly). A drunkard is one who is a sot, one habitually under the influence of strong drink. An extortioner means one who practices oppressive and unjust exaction and obtains by threats and violence. The New Translation renders the Greek word that is used here as "rapaciousness," which means one given to plunder and seizing things forcibly, one greedy of gain.

If any one who is called a brother is found pursuing a course of conduct, such as is indicated by any of the above terms, he is to be put away as a wicked person. We might add that we do not believe that 1 Corinthians 5:11 gives us a complete list of things which mark one out as a wicked person, or the only characteristics of evil for which one is to be put away. It is rather a characteristic list of what moral wickedness is. The apostle says, "with such an one no not to eat." We believe this phrase has a wider application than just referring to the six things of this verse. From 1 Samuel 15:23 we learn that "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." So rebellion and stubbornness, which is really self-will, are wickedness also. It is well to notice that the same evils which 1 Corinthians 5:11-13 gives as marking out a so-called brother as a wicked person are also listed in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 as characteristic of those who shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven. Thus by being guilty of these things the person concerned places himself outwardly in the class of those who have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and his place is without the Assembly and not within.

Such wickedness raises the question as to whether the person is really a child of God. His walk is contrary to his profession, so the apostle says, "If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator" etc. He does not say, "If any brother," for when a professing Christian is walking in such wickedness, one cannot be sure that he really is a brother or sister in the Lord. If godly sorrow and repentance follow, as was the case with the man in question in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 (see 2 Corinthians 2:6-11), the Assembly can be assured that the person was and is truly a child of God.

02.33. Doctrinal Evil

Doctrinal Evil

We have considered what wickedness is and what characterizes those who are to be put away from the Assembly as wicked persons. We have been principally occupied with moral wickedness, or evil in one's life and walk. There is, however, another form in which serious evil may manifest itself and that is doctrinal evil, or evil teaching. Scripture speaks of this in several places. We shall now consider this phase of evil.

We have already noticed the words in 1 Corinthians 5:6-7, "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump." There we find moral evil spoken of as leaven that needs to be purged out lest it leaven the whole lump-the entire Assembly. We also find the same words, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" in Galatians 5:9. In studying this Epistle of Galatians we find that the leaven which the apostle referred to, and that by which the Galatian Assemblies were in danger of being leavened, was evil teaching by some as to the Gospel. The Gospel was perverted by these teachers and thus the fundamentals of the Christian faith were attacked.

We thereby learn that evil teaching is also leaven and is to be regarded equally as destructive of the purity of the Assembly as evil in practice or moral evil. Consequently the responsibility enforced upon the Assembly at Corinth to purge out the old leaven was also binding upon the Assemblies in Galatia and all Assemblies of today are likewise responsible to purge out from their midst any leaven of evil teaching or persons teaching it just as they are also responsible to purge out any leaven of moral evil.

Evil doctrine undermines the foundation of the Christian faith, debases its entire character, and insults the Person and work of Christ, thereby robbing Him of His proper glory. It is more dangerous and destructive than moral evil, because it is more subtle. Wicked doctrine may be propagated by those whose lives are outwardly blameless, hence it is more deceptive than evil that is outwardly manifest in the life. Satan transforms himself into an angel of light and so do his ministers (2 Corinthians 11:12-15). There is also more danger of evil teaching spreading and being taken up by others than moral evil, as the latter is more readily detected and more naturally abhorred. A man may hold and teach blasphemous doctrine and yet seem as pious in his language and life as the most devoted Christian. Therefore the people of God must be much on their guard against the leaven of doctrinal evil.

Many warnings are given in Scripture against such false teachers arising among God's people, who secretly "shall bring in damnable heresies even denying the Lord that bought them." (See Acts 20:28-30; Php 3:18-19; 2 Timothy 3:1-17; 2 Peter 2:1-22; the Epistles of John and Jude). "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy" (1 Timothy 4:1-2).

Doctrinal evil is any teaching which touches the Person of Christ, anything which denies His full deity, His real, full, and sinless humanity, His perfect sacrificial work as being complete atonement and the only ground of salvation, His bodily resurrection, or coming glory. If any one teaches or holds that which denies these truths as to Christ's Person or work, or the truths of justification by faith and grace alone, or the necessity of regeneration, or the eternal punishment of the unsaved, and persists in such teachings, that one is guilty of doctrinal evil and has no place in the Assembly of God. His place is "without" and not "within." Any teaching that subverts the fundamentals of the Christian faith is evil doctrine and leaven that must be purged out of the Assembly. Behind all such teachings are seducing spirits and demons.

However, here we must exercise caution. We must not go to the extreme and call every erroneous teaching evil doctrine, or mark every interpretation or application of Scripture which differs from our view, as wicked teaching. Where no fundamental truth is in question, love and forbearance one with another is to be exercised and Php 3:15-16 acted upon. "If in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Of course, one whose teaching is not correct and Scriptural cannot be accepted as a teacher in the Assembly. It may be necessary to impose silence upon him, yet his teaching may not be such as necessitates his being put away as a wicked person. The second Epistle of John also furnishes us with important instructions as to evil teachers and our dealings with them. "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, they who do not confess Jesus Christ coming in flesh-this is the deceiver and the antichrist ... Whosoever goes forward and abides not in the doctrine of the Christ has not God. He that abides in the doctrine, he has both the Father and the Son. If any one come to you and bring not this doctrine, do not receive him into (the) house, and greet him not; for he who greets him partakes in his wicked works" (2 John 1:7-11, New Trans.). The above was written to a lady and is the path which an individual is to pursue in regard to one who does not abide in the doctrine of Christ and is therefore an evil teacher. Such an one is not to be received into one's house or greeted, for to even greet such makes one a partaker of his wicked works according to the above Scripture.

We may therefore rightly conclude that if such a person is to be so treated by an individual believer out of loyalty to Christ, whom that one is dishonoring, certainly the Assembly is to act the same towards such and to have no fellowship whatever with that person. Thus on the ground of 2 John 1:7-11, any one who teaches or holds subversive doctrine as to the Person of Christ-one who goes beyond what Scripture teaches and does not confess Jesus Christ coming in flesh is a wicked person and must be put outside the Assembly and not received into one's home or even greeted on the street.

If an individual or a company of God's people knowingly associates with a wicked person they are partakers of his wicked works and are as defiled in God's sight as though personally holding or practicing evil. Association with evil defiles. This is a principle taught throughout Scripture. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," and "evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33). Believers must purge out evil and have no link whatsoever with it or with the person who holds it. If an Assembly refuses to put away a wicked person, one guilty of moral or doctrinal evil, it becomes defiled and may, in due time, if it continues in that path, have to be rejected as an Assembly of God.

Procedure

Having considered what moral and spiritual wickedness is we may now speak of the proper and godly procedure in carrying out this solemn act of putting away wicked persons.

First of all there must be a thorough investigation of the case by brothers of maturity and experience, those who have the general confidence of the Assembly and who exercise oversight in the gathering. Details must be gone into and the facts of the case collected and conclusively established by evidence. "Hear say" and reports must be looked into, sifted down, and the truth ascertained. All disciplinary action of any form must be based on facts and Scripture.

Deuteronomy 13:12-15 gives us important instructions as to what to do when a report of some evil is heard. "If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities ... Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known; Then shalt thou enquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you; Thou shalt surely smite" etc.

Inquiry, search, and diligent asking must take place. Then if the report of evil is found to be true and the thing is certain, the smiting of judgment is to take place. "Hear say" or reports of evil are never to be accepted as truth until careful inquiry has proven such to be true and evidence is found as proof.

We have already referred to Leviticus 13:1-59, noting how the priest must carefully and patiently investigate any person who had any of the symptoms of leprosy. There must be no haste or presumption. Before any disciplinary action is taken there must be absolute certainty of the charge of evil. What is not clear, manifest, or certain, we must wait upon God to manifest and bring into the light.

"One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established" (Deuteronomy 19:15). "In, the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1; Matthew 18:16) . This is an important principle in God's Word and is stated a number of times. For the establishment of any charge of iniquity, there must be two or three witnesses or the confession of guilt by the one so charged. One witness will not do. It is not said that the witnesses must be Christians, as is sometimes insisted upon. Any reliable and upright person's testimony should be accepted as a witness. The case of the man in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 was one that was commonly reported as fornication. It was a publicly known sin and there was no need to establish the guilt. It was something known by common report and the duty of the Assembly was clear; the wicked person must be put away. When such is the case, we must act likewise today, but generally charges of evil need to be investigated and established first. When a case has been thoroughly investigated by responsible brothers and the person is found to be wicked, the facts should be laid before the Assembly as the basis for reaching a united agreement before the Lord to put away the unrepentant person. The whole Assembly is not called to discuss all the details of cases of discipline. Even nature would teach one the impropriety of bringing the details of a case of immorality before the whole Assembly. But when a case has been searched into and facts mark the offender as a wicked person who must be excommunicated from the

gathering, the whole Assembly is called upon to perform the solemn and humiliating act of putting away. Putting one away from the Assembly, as well as the reception of believers into the gathering, is the act of the entire Assembly. It must be an Assembly act and not that of a few brothers claiming to act for the Assembly. In 1 Corinthians 5:4, where the apostle is speaking of the act of putting away, he says, "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ." This would imply that all the gathering (as far as possible) should be present to act together in the unity of the Spirit in this most serious act of excommunication. All should be exercised about the dishonor brought upon the Lord by the evil that has been manifested in their midst and be humbled before Him about it, making the sin their own. This attitude of humiliation and deep heart exercise which should characterize the Assembly in putting one away from their midst, we have previously discussed, so we shall not enlarge on it here.

Acting for the Whole Church The local Assembly must ever remember that it is the local representation or expression of the whole Church of God and that it is acting for the Church everywhere. The Church is one body and there can be no such thing as Assemblies acting or existing independently of each other. The truth of the oneness of the Body of Christ and the necessity of keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace requires that all true discipline exercised by one Assembly be accepted and acted upon by all other Assemblies. What is bound according to God's Word in one Assembly is bound in heaven and everywhere on earth. The Assembly is responsible to act as representing the authority of the Lord in its midst and that which is His mind in one place is His mind for the Church everywhere. But this means a corresponding responsibility for the local Assembly. If its acts are binding upon all other Assemblies, it must act according to God's Word and thus satisfy the consciences of the Churches elsewhere. Its actions must be of such a character that any inquiry as to them would reveal them as righteous and according to the name of the Lord and His Word.

Attitude Toward One Put Out The one thus excommunicated is put outside the entire sphere of Christian fellowship. With such an one we are not to keep any company or to even eat a meal. "With such an one no not to eat" (1 Corinthians 5:11) . "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Corinthians 5:13). We should note that the injunction is not just to put the evil one out of the Assembly, but "from among yourselves." That means outside of the whole circle of Christian fellowship, ecclesiastically and socially. Such an one is to be left alone and made to feel the seriousness of his sin, so that he may be broken down, brought to repentance, and restored to the Lord. Of course, where the wrong-doer is a member of a Christian household and living in the same home (as a husband or son) it would be going too far to literally apply the word, "with such an one no not to eat." A wife would not thus refuse to sit at the table with her husband under discipline, because to do so would ignore her responsibility as a wife. She manifests her refusal of fellowship in other ways.

While the Assembly is to act in faithfulness towards the excommunicated one, the desire and prayer of each one should be that the person may be restored to the Lord and to the fellowship of the gathering again. This we have previously dwelt upon in the beginning of our study of "Discipline." As time goes on, brethren may feel led of the Lord to visit the erring one in a purely pastoral way and labor for his restoration. If there is not grace and spiritual strength to deal thus with him, no advance should be made towards such an one, as a mere social visit would really be

annulling and depreciating the act of excommunication and would greatly retard restoration of soul.

Properly speaking, the advances for return to fellowship ought to begin with the one who has been put away. His sorrow and humble attitude would indicate to the Assembly that the discipline has been effective and that a work of God is going on in his soul. When the cause for excommunication has been owned and judged and removed out of the life, and when there is real evidence that the disciplined one is truly restored to the Lord, the Assembly may take up the case for restoration to Assembly fellowship and loose the discipline.

02.34. Uncertain Cases

Uncertain Cases

Sometimes a difficulty may arise in an Assembly in connection with an individual where the facts are not clear to those who investigate, or to the Assembly, and there is uncertainty as to what should be done. The case is not cleared up or manifest, either as to the person's guilt or innocence, or perhaps as to how serious the matter is, whether it is but a case of one overtaken in a fault (Galatians 6:1) or a wicked course of conduct. In such circumstances the Assembly should not act in discipline until everything is clear, manifest and established. There should be an earnest waiting upon God to clearly manifest the true nature of the case and to direct as to what action or course should be taken according to the Word of God. As previously noted from Leviticus 13:1-59, anyone in Israel that showed symptoms of leprosy was to be shut up for seven days and then examined by the priest. If the plague had not spread, he was shut up seven days more and again examined by the priest at the end of this period. If the plague was seen to be somewhat dark and had not spread and was not deeper than the skin, the person was pronounced clean. But if the scab had spread abroad in the skin after he was seen of the priest, he must be examined again and if it was manifest that the scab had spread and was deeper than the skin, he was pronounced unclean and a leper that had to be put outside the camp.

While there may not be a parallel Scripture in the New Testament directing us to similar action in corresponding cases of possible evil in the Church, many brethren believe that a principle is contained in the typical action of Leviticus 13:1-59 which may be helpfully applied to uncertain cases in the Assembly which show some characteristic marks of spiritual leprosy, yet are not clearly established or manifested. Where the evil is-of a serious character, yet not fully developed or manifested, the priestly care of the Assembly may be led to ask the person to voluntarily refrain for the time being from partaking of the Lord's Supper. where fellowship is expressed, until the matter is cleared up, established and the Scriptural course definitely perceived. This would be a sort of "shutting one up" as in Leviticus 13:1-59. This is not a grade of discipline, but simply a temporary measure while awaiting investigation or further examination. This investigation should be prompt, thorough, and Scriptural, that the reproach of possible evil be not allowed to rest upon a person unless proven guilty. No person should be asked to refrain from breaking bread upon a mere suspicion of evil. But where there are grave fears that the evil may be worse than what is already known and manifest, the Assembly could ask such an one to "sit back."

While there may be no New Testament Scripture that would give the Assembly authority to demand that one in such circumstances refrain from breaking bread and "sit back," yet for the sake of the testimony because of the cloud of possible evil resting upon the person (as in a case of public scandal), the brethren acting in priestly care may be led of the Lord to suggest to such an one that it would be best if he or she would refrain from breaking bread until the matter is cleared up and established one way or the other. If the person refused to do so, the Assembly could not demand it, as in the case supposed, guilt is not yet established and the Assembly cannot act in

discipline until it is. The reaction of the person to this request might further manifest his true state of soul. In any case of "sitting back" the priestly care in the gathering must carry on in the case until the person is cleared or manifested as wicked. The matter must not be left lying, so to say. With this we close our meditations on the subject of "Discipline." May the Lord give us a greater understanding of the holiness that becomes His house and of the restoring grace and love of His heart towards His erring people. And as we close our chapter on the Local Aspect of the Church," we trust that the reader has seen more clearly from God's Word what constitutes a Scripturally gathered Assembly and what should characterize such a gathering.

R. K. Campbell

02.35. Chapter 4: Assembly Relationships

Chapter 4 Assembly Relationships

02.36. Assembly Relationships

Assembly Relationships

Having considered the Scriptural characteristics of a local Assembly of believers gathered on the only Biblical ground of gathering-the owning of the One Body of Christ-and to the name of Christ, the only divine center of gathering, we would now inquire as to the Scriptural relationship that should exist between such Assemblies.

Independency or Unity

There are two possibilities with regard to their relationship with each other. They may exist as independent Assemblies, as individual units responsible only to Christ the head in heaven, as some teach and practice, or they may function in unity with each other, carrying out collective as well as local responsibilities, as is taught and practiced by others. The question, in brief, is which of these two possible courses of action involving diverse principles is the Scriptural one. Which is the path laid down for us in God's Word? Which path did the New Testament Assemblies pursue? This is the question that must be settled by the Scriptures, for two distinct schools of thought and action, so to say, have developed on this point among those claiming to be Scripturally gathered Assemblies.

One Body

First of all, we would reiterate what we have stated several times in our previous chapter on the "Local Aspect of the Church," that since there is but one body of all true believers, each local Assembly is the representation or expression in that place of the whole Church of God. It is a part of a great unit "The Church of the Living God,"-and therefore from this standpoint alone there can be no thought of independent Assemblies.

If each local Assembly is a living part of that great Body of Christ on earth, then there must be a practical unity and a working together in fellowship among all these local representations of that One Body, otherwise the truth of the One Body is nullified both in principle and in practice.

Looking at it from a natural standpoint, if a great international company has branches or local representations in many places they must all function together as a unit and according to unified principles with local adaptations. If each branch or local unit acted independently of the other. they would not function as one company; there must be common action and unity to be efficient members of one company.

1 Corinthians 12:1-31 teaches us the marvelous unity that exists among all the various and diverse members of the Body of Christ. "For even as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also (is) the Christ" (i. e. Christ and the Church) (1 Corinthians 12:12, New Trans.). "But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you . . . God hath tempered the body together ... that the members should have

the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it., or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular" (1 Corinthians 12:20-21, 1 Corinthians 12:24-27).

Just as there is perfect unity, common functioning, and dependency among the many and diverse members of the human body, so God has ordained the same for the spiritual Body of Christ. As there is no independency, but greatest dependency among the members of the human body, so there can be no independency among the members of the Body of Christ if there is to be proper functioning according to God's mind. One member cannot say to another member, "I have no need of you., There is to be no schism or division in the Body of Christ. The Corinthian Assembly at that time was the Body of Christ at Corinth and members in particular of the universal body, the Church.

Now if the foregoing is true for individual members of the Body of Christ, does not the same principle apply to local Assemblies, which are but groups of individual members of the Body gathered together in one place? Assuredly so. The truth of the One Body admits of no independency whatsoever, individually or collectively.

Keeping the Unity of the Spirit Not only is there One Body, there is also one Spirit, and Ephesians 4:3-4 exhorts us to use "diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. (There is) one body and one Spirit, as ye have been also called in one hope of your calling" (New Trans.). "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body . . . and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). This is the divine unity which was formed by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and into which all believers are brought. We have all been made to drink into one Spirit. This unity is formed by the Holy Spirit and He has the deepest and most intimate interest in carrying out and maintaining it for the fulfillment of the Father's counsels and the glory of His Son. We cannot break this unity of the Body of Christ which the Spirit of God has made, for it is formed once and for all and Christ ever sees His Church as one, no matter how divided it may be on earth. But we can fail to manifest this unity of the Spirit, therefore, we are exhorted to use diligence to keep it in the uniting bond of peace.

Another has written:

"The unity of the Spirit' is that power or principle which keeps the saints walking together in their proper relationships in the unity of the Body of Christ. It is the moral realization of its unity: and endeavoring to keep it maintains our relations with all saints according to the Spirit of God and in the truth.

"We meet with others in the name of the Lord, on the principle of 'one body and one Spirit.' We thus 'endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,' and we seek thus to be in the 'fellowship of the Holy Ghost,' who maintains the unity of the Body of Christ ...

"What, then, is this unity? It is the power and principle by which the saints are enabled to walk together in their proper relations in the body, and as members of Christ. It may involve my separation from one member because he is attached in practice, or religiously, to that which will not stand the test of the Word of God. It may call me to walk with another who is walking in godliness and in its truth. . .

"This unity, too, excludes individuality most fully. No one can take an isolated place. If he is called to stand alone in some locality because of the Word of the Lord, it puts him in communion, and on common ground, all over the world, in other localities, with all who are walking in such a truth. It excludes individuality, too, when together with others; one might be tempted to act in independency of other members of Christ-to take action himself, not in communion with the rest. It throws us outside every system of man, too, but keeps us in that unity which is according to God!

" . . . It is wide enough for all, because it embraces all in its breadth, whether they are there, or not. It is exclusive of evil from its midst, as known and accepted; to admit it would cause it to cease to be the unity of the Spirit. It is not merely the unity of Christians-which is the effort of the many to effect, often to the refusal of the truth of the Body of Christ ... God attaches unity to Christ, not Christ to unity! Then it must be true in nature to Him whose body it is; it must be practically holy and true (Revelation 3:7)." (F. G. Patterson).

We shall also shortly notice that there is a divine unity of teaching and practice laid down for us in the Epistle to the Corinthians by the Spirit of God. And this was not for the Corinthian Assembly alone, but for "every church." Thus, in order to keep the unity of the Spirit, there must be uniformity of teaching and general practice among Assemblies and a recognition of each other as being in this divine unity. There can be no carrying out of the "unity of the Spirit" if Assemblies stand and act for themselves in independence of each other. The truth of the One Body and One Spirit, then, demands that Assemblies stand on the ground of this divine unity and that they recognize this relationship of unity with each other and seek to practice it. The principle of independent Assemblies is therefore in sharpest contrast and collision with the divine exhortation to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace." It is therefore unscriptural and divisive.

02.37. Unity of New Testament Assemblies

Unity of New Testament Assemblies Teaching of Corinthians The Epistle to the Corinthians is preeminently the Epistle on Church order, as we have previously pointed out in chapter III. We shall therefore turn to this Epistle for instruction as to the question of what relationship should exist between Assemblies of believers. In 1 Corinthians 1:2 we see the principle of the unity of Assemblies taught in the very beginning of the Epistle, for Paul addresses it "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth ... with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." He does not think of the Assembly at Corinth as standing independently of Assemblies of believers elsewhere, but links them up with "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ." And what is more, he meant that this important Epistle on Church order was to be, not only for those at Corinth, but for believers everywhere. In 1 Corinthians 4:17 the apostle says he had sent Timotheus to them "who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church." There was uniformity in the apostle's ways and teaching; he acted the same and taught the same in every Assembly and thereby set for the believers an example of the unity that should be among the Assemblies in teaching and practice.

Going on 1 Corinthians 7:1-40, where the question of marriage is taken up, the apostle says in 1 Corinthians 7:17 : "But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches." There was to be one teaching and practice as to marital relationships in all the Assemblies.

Then in 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 where the subject is woman covering her head when praying or prophesying, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:16, "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." There was one practice and order among all the Assemblies regarding women wearing a head covering. In 1 Corinthians 14:33 the apostle writes: "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." In all the Assemblies things were to be "done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40), and in peace. A further notice of unity is seen in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2. "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." Even as to the common matter of the collection there was to be a unified practice among the Assemblies of Galatia, and among all others, of the believers laying aside in store upon the first day of the week as God had prospered them. In 1 Corinthians 16:19 we read, "The churches of Asia salute you." Here again is the collective aspect.

Passing on to the Second Epistle to the Corinthians we find that it is addressed "unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia" (2 Corinthians 1:1) . Here Paul links them up with all the saints of the province of Achaia to which Corinth belonged. He thought of them, not as independent Assemblies, but as one in all Achaia. In 2 Corinthians 11:28 we have a further touch of unity. Speaking of his pathway of suffering, Paul says, "Besides those things that

are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." In the heart of this dear servant of God the Assemblies were all one and he cared for them all. Do not these many passages teach conclusively that the inspired apostle taught and practiced the principle of the unity of Assemblies? Certainly one must be willfully blind not to see this from the foregoing verses of the two Epistles.

Here, then, we have from these two Epistles, as another has well said, "first the local assembly, the primary sphere of all practical fellowship with its responsibilities of discipline and the like; secondly, the surrounding assemblies of the province, the first to be affected when any breakdown occurs in the local assembly; thirdly, the whole Church everywhere, the ultimate boundary to which such breakdown may extend its influence" (F. B. Hole). There is first of all a local responsibility and then a collective responsibility with Assemblies of a province or country and with Assemblies everywhere to maintain a common and unified testimony for Christ.

Churches of Galatia

We also find that the Epistle to the Galatians was written, not to one Assembly, but "unto the churches of Galatia." Paul thought of them all as a united testimony for Christ which Satan was seeking to move away from the hope of the Gospel and he wrote his Epistle to them all.

Romans 16:1-27 In the many greetings of this chapter we see the close ties between the workers in Greece and the saints in Rome. And in Romans 16:16 we have in the expression, "The churches of Christ salute you," the same collective aspect of the Assemblies as we have seen in Corinthians and Galatians. The Book of Acts In Acts 8:1-40 we see how the believers at Samaria were brought into happy fellowship with the believers at Jerusalem by the coming down of Peter and John and by their receiving the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the apostles' hands. Of old Jerusalem and Samaria were rivals and had the believers in these places now been blessed separately and independently, their rivalry might have been greater than ever. Samaria must own Jerusalem. No independency would be allowed. In Acts 9:31, after the conversion of Saul of Tarsus we read: "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." Does not this show a unity of Assemblies in all these provinces? How could it be otherwise if they were walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit?

Passing on to Acts 15:1-41, we find therein a vivid example of how the New Testament Assemblies acted in unity and what they did when that unity was threatened. Some from Judaea were insisting that the Gentile believers must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. After Paul and Barnabas had much disputation with them, it was determined that these two brothers and certain others from Antioch should go to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. There, in conference, the matter was settled and the mind of the Lord was ascertained for both Jewish and Gentile believers. Letters were written and sent by chosen men from the apostles and elders and the whole Church at Jerusalem to the brethren of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. When the Epistle was read to the believers at Antioch, "they rejoiced for the consolation" (Acts 15:31). A division among the Assemblies had been averted by united consultation and united action, and joy and consolation was the result.

There was no thought that Antioch could act one way and receive Gentiles according to the free grace of God and Jerusalem would act in another way and not let in Gentiles. No such independency is seen. There is not a trace of such disorder and independency throughout the Scriptures, but every possible evidence in fact and doctrine insisted on, of there being One Body on earth whose unity was the foundation of blessing and its maintenance the duty of every Christian.

While we do not have apostles today, nor a "Jerusalem" as in Acts 15:1-41, yet an important principle is therein laid down for us to act upon at all times. That is, those questions which affect the Church as a whole should be considered in conference among representative brethren from the Assemblies who seek the Lord's guidance together in prayer and consultation. Assemblies or individuals have no right to act independently in such matters which affect the whole Church. We must use "diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace," using "all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love." "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14).*

* We need to remember, however, that authority to act for the Lord according to His Word is given to the local assembly gathered unto His Name. While it is necessary for brethren to counsel together in conference, they are not given authority as such to make decisions binding upon all. This is the prerogative of a local assembly acting in the Name of the Lord in harmony with His Word. The above is what we believe we should learn from Acts 15:1-41. The reader can judge for himself the Scripturalness of the following comment on this chapter: "The Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-41), where the apostles and elders decided a matter of Christian liberty for the Gentile believers, has no counterpart today; for we have the New Testament scriptures complete as our guide on all questions" ("The Church of God" by F. Ferguson). The same writer says, "Each local Church stands by itself ... Neither is there any 'confederation of churches' of a country, province or district." This shows how much of Scripture is rejected and passed over by those who adopt the principle of independent assemblies. Another servant of the Lord, who also maintained the independency of assemblies, once told the writer that he didn't believe the apostles and elders were guided by the Holy Spirit in coming together in conference as they did in Acts 15:1-41. What audacity and rejection of God's Word to maintain a principle of self-will. The apostles and elders could say, "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us" (Acts 15:28)

Summary

Thus we see that there existed in the New Testament times a practical bond of active fellowship in the truth among the Assemblies, sustained and strengthened by the effective power of the Holy Spirit. There existed a circle of gatherings of God's children in fellowship with one another, to the exclusion of all not belonging to the fellowship of the One Body. There was not only the acknowledging of the truth of the One Body, but the positive outflow of love and affection in the One Spirit. No trace of independency is seen among the New Testament Assemblies in doctrine or practice, or any hint of the present day teaching that each local Assembly stands by itself. This teaching of independency is therefore of man's devising and must be rejected as not of God.

02.38. Bound on Earth

Bound on Earth The principle of unity of action is also implied in the words of our Lord in Matthew 18:18 : "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Christ was speaking in the previous verses of discipline and of one who would not hear the Church or repent of his trespass against his brother. Such an one must be put out of the Assembly and his sin bound upon him in discipline. Its Universality This governmental act of binding or loosing of sins by those gathered unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is bound on earth and in heaven according to the Lord's words. Notice the Lord did not say, "Whatsoever ye shall bind in the Church or Assembly shall be bound in heaven," but "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." This expression "on earth" certainly covers more than the local Assembly where the discipline is enacted. These words of Christ show that the disciplinary act of one Assembly in the name of the Lord is binding upon all other Assemblies on earth. What is bound according to His Word in one gathering is bound on earth and ratified in heaven and is therefore to be accepted as such by all Assemblies. To do otherwise would be a denial of the unity of the Body of Christ and acting as independent Churches in opposition to the Lord's words that an Assembly's act is bound on earth and in heaven.

If one is Scripturally excluded from one Assembly he is outside of the Church of God on earth and must be considered as excluded from every Assembly elsewhere. As we have previously stated, the local assembly represents the universal Church of God and acts for the Church as such and not just for itself locally. Thus unity of action in discipline among Assemblies is taught by the words of the Lord in Matthew 18:18.

Another has well written: "Suppose we excommunicate a person here, and you receive him at S., it is evident you have denied us here as a body gathered in Christ's name, and acting by His authority: for that is what discipline hangs upon. Further, the unity of the body is denied wholly. It is clear, if I have a part as faithful to Christ in excluding a person here, I cannot have one in another place in breaking bread with him there. Brethren united in the name of the Lord are not infallible, and remonstrance may be all right, but if a person is to be received in one place who is rejected in another, it is evident there is an end to unity and common action ... How could I hold with the rejection of a person here and his reception at S.? When deliberately done, it is evidently impossible. If I am out of communion with him here, and in communion with him there, the unity of the body is gone. And where is the authority of the Lord?" (J. N. Darby).

Mistaken Action That an Assembly may fail in its disciplinary actions and rule amiss is possible. The mind of God may be missed through a low moral state and its action may need to be rectified. Nevertheless, the action of an Assembly, even if questionable, should be respected at first view by other Assemblies. No Assembly has the right to immediately set aside a judgment of another gathering because it deems it unrighteous. That would be acting independently. The pretended competency of one Assembly to judge another Assembly's acts and decide for itself whether it will accept its decisions or not is certainly a denial, in practice, of the truth of the One Body and

outright independency.

We believe the following extracts from the writings of that esteemed servant of Christ, J. N. Darby, give the path of God which should be followed in regard to Assembly judgments and Assembly relationships. "I have always found that respecting the action of an Assembly prima facie (at first view) is the way of wisdom and what God owns . . . A judgment of an Assembly, even if I thought it a mistake, I should in the first instance accept and act upon. My experience has been that the path of God, is to respect the judgment of an Assembly of God, while free to remonstrate and beg them to review their judgment."-Letters, Vol. 2, p. 475, 156 (Old Edition).

"But while a local Assembly exists actually in a personal responsibility of its own; and while its acts, if they are of God, bind the other Assemblies, as in the unity of the one body, this fact does not do away with another which. is of the highest importance, and which many seem to forget, viz., that the voices of brethren in other localities have liberty, equally with those of the local brethren, to make themselves heard in their midst when discussing the affairs of a meeting of the saints, although they are not locally members of that meeting. To deny this would, indeed, be a serious denial of the unity of the body of Christ.

"And more than this, the conscience and moral condition of a local Assembly may be such as to betray ignorance, or at least an imperfect comprehension of what is due to the glory of Christ and to Himself. All this renders the understanding so weak that there is no long;any spiritual power for discerning good and evil. Perhaps in an Assembly, also, prejudices, haste, or, indeed, the bent of mind, and THE INFLUENCE OF ONE or of many, may lead the Assembly's judgment ASTRAY, and cause it to punish unjustly and do a serious wrong to a brother.

"When such is the case IT IS A REAL BLESSING that spiritual and wise men from other meetings should step in and seek to awaken the conscience of the Assembly, as also if they come at the request of the gathering, or of those, to whom the matter is the chief difficulty at the tune. In such a case their stepping in, far from being looked upon as an intrusion, ought to be received and acknowledged in the name of the Lord. To act in any other way would be to SANCTION INDEPENDENCY and to DENY the UNITY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST.

"Nevertheless, those who once come in and act thus ought not to act without the rest of the Assembly, but with the conscience of all.

"When an Assembly has rejected every remonstrance, and refuses to accept the help and judgment of other brethren, when patience has been exhausted, an Assembly which has been in communion with it is justified in annulling its wrong act, and in accepting the person who was put out if they were mistaken as to him. But when we are driven to this extremity, the difficulty has become a question of the refusal of fellowship with the Assembly which has acted wrongly, and which has thus of its own accord broken its fellowship with the rest of those who act in the unity of the body. Such measures can only be taken after much care and patience, in order that the conscience of all may go along with the action as being of God.

"I call attention to these subjects because there might be a tendency to set up AN INDEPENDENCEOF ACTION in each local Assembly by refusing to admit the intervention of those who, being in fellowship might come from other places." (Translated from the "Messenger Evangelique" (1872).

Godly Procedure In summing up what we believe to be the path of godly procedure as to the action of an Assembly in binding or loosing and any mistaken action therein, the following statement of principles is presented:

1. Normally what the Assembly binds on earth, God winds in heaven according to Matthew 18:18. If a man will not hear the Church, acting for God, he manifests stubbornness, which "is as iniquity" (1 Samuel 15:23).
2. There is need of submission one to another and to the Lord in Assembly decisions (1 Peter 5:5). If an Assembly is not united in its judgment, one faction should not press its judgment over the protest of the others. On the other hand, where an Assembly is largely of one mind, it is Scriptural for the others to submit to its judgment, even if they believe it faulty, unless something very vital is involved.
3. If, however, a judgment of an Assembly is definitely unrighteous and cannot be Scripturally sustained, we cannot believe that the Judge of all the earth, who does what is right (Genesis 18:25), would hold anyone responsible to bow permanently to what is unrighteous and contrary to Scripture. The Lord's words, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven," are not unconditional and absolute or to be misconstrued as equivalent with "approved in heaven." The throne of heaven can only approve what is righteous and according to God's Word and of His Spirit. An Assembly's act may be viewed as bound in heaven, but if it is not according to the Word and will of God, it will be a distressing bond bringing sorrow and confusion in its train, rather than being a uniting bond of peace which draws hearts together in happy, holy and free fellowship in the Spirit.
4. In such cases of mistaken and unrighteous judgment of an Assembly, there should be an orderly and Godly procedure. When every man does what is right in his own eyes, confusion results, as in the days of the Judges in Israel (Judges 17:6; Judges 21:25), and authority is nullified or set at nought. "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33). The orderly procedure would be for individuals or Assemblies who are exercised about the wrong action, to present in grace their exercises to the Assembly and seek to show them "a more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31). If our eye is single, we will seek God's glory and not selfjustification. Thus the principle of grace in government would apply to Assemblies as well as to individuals.
5. The Assembly in such a case must be willing to reconsider its judgment and action which does not commend itself as of God and according to His Word to brethren at large. God's Word is given for "correction" as well as for other purposes (2 Timothy 3:16), and Assemblies as well as individuals must be subject to it.
6. In the finality of things, submission to supreme authority comes before submission to subordinate authority; and the call to "hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 2:7; Revelation 2:11; Revelation 2:17; Revelation 2:29), takes precedence over the command to "hear the church" (Matthew 18:17). This is in accord with the principle that "God must be obeyed rather than men" (Acts 5:29 New Trans.). When an Assembly acts in self-will or mistakenly, they are acting as men (1 Corinthians 3:3). Christ ever remains the Head of the Church and all must be subject to Him.

7. Hence if an Assembly maintains permanently a judgment which their brethren generally deem to be unrighteous and contrary to Scripture, that Assembly, by refusing correction from God's Word, manifests insubjection to the Lord, the Head of the Church, and loses its proper Assembly character. Such an Assembly might finally have to be cut off by the others from fellowship. This would be an extreme case, and such action should only be taken after all efforts of grace have failed to recover it.

We trust the foregoing will help our readers to perceive more clearly the divine path in regard to Assembly judgments and the proper relationship that should exist between Assemblies, especially when failure and difficulties arise. May we be kept from extreme actions of all kinds, on one side or the other, and be preserved from independency in any shape or form.

02.39. The Seven Churches of Asia

The Seven Churches of Asia

Those who contend for the principle of independent Assemblies invariably refer to the messages to the seven Churches in Asia, as recorded in Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22, as ground for their action. They point out that the Lord addressed each Assembly individually and did not charge Ephesus with Pergamos' faults and iniquity, or with Thyatira's, or vice-versa. Therefore they conclude that we are not responsible for what goes on in other Assemblies, but that each Assembly is only responsible to Christ, its head, for its own affairs. Let us examine this teaching and see if it is according to all the truth of Scripture.

First of all, we may say that the book of Revelation does not teach Church order or lay down for us Assembly principles. This is not the purpose of this book. While we can certainly learn much profitable truth on Assembly lines from these first three chapters of Revelation, which really give the prophetic history of the professing Church, we must go to the book of Acts and the Epistles of Paul for full instructions as to the Church and its order and principles of conduct and action. These we have already considered in previous pages and have noted that no independency of action is taught anywhere or was practiced, but that unity and corporate responsibility and action is found therein.

Local Responsibility

It is, of course, definitely true that each Assembly is primarily responsible to Christ its head for what goes on in its midst. There is first of all the local responsibility of each Assembly to maintain the holiness of the Lord and Scriptural order in its own sphere of accountability. Therefore, it is only natural that we find the Lord addressing the seven Assemblies of Asia separately and pointing out to each one what He approved of among them and what was not according to His holiness or His desires. But the whole truth of the matter is that responsibility does not end with the local Assembly.

Collective Responsibility

There is a collective responsibility to maintain the truths of God's Word as well as a local responsibility. This flows from our being members of the One Body of Christ. Assemblies are part of that One Body, therefore they cannot exist as so many local, independent bodies. They are local representations of the One Body of Christ on earth and the interests of the whole body should be the interests and concern of each Assembly.

Coming directly now to the messages to the seven Churches of Asia, we find that the Lord did not only hold each Assembly responsible for its internal condition, but that He also added at the close of each message, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Notice He did not say, "hear what the Spirit saith to you," or to "the Assembly," but "hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." This is plural and indicates collective responsibility and unity of

Assemblies. Ephesus was not only to hear what the Lord had to say to her locally, but what the Spirit had to say to all the Churches of Asia. And so with each Church; they were to hear what the Spirit said to the other Churches as well as to themselves. They were not to be ignorant of each other's condition or to be indifferent about it. Each was to know what the Spirit of God had to say about the wrong or evil in each Assembly and they had a corporate responsibility about it.

If the evil was not removed which the Lord pointed out as existing at Thyatira, could Smyrna or Philadelphia receive individuals from this Assembly or commend saints to it? Assuredly not, for to do so would be expressing fellowship and making a link with that which the Lord judged as evil. Association with evil defiles. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" (1 Corinthians 5:6).

Overcomers Addressed In each message to the various Churches in Asia the overcomer. is addressed in connection with hearing what the Spirit saith unto the Churches. Such would heed the Spirit's message and purge out the evil or else purge themselves from the evil. If the Assembly did not judge itself and purge out the evil, the separated overcomers would be the only ones that fellowship could be extended to in righteousness and holiness.

After the Lord removed the candlestick from Ephesus, as He said He would if they did not repent, could it be recognized as an Assembly and individuals received from it or commended to it? Surely not. Only the separated overcomers could be recognized and fellowshipped by the overcomers elsewhere. This would meet the Lord's approval.

Thus we find nothing to support the idea of independent Assemblies in the messages to the seven Churches, but rather that the uniform teaching- of Scripture of the unity and collective responsibility of Assemblies is therein seen.

02.40. Examples of Unity in Israel

Examples of Unity in Israel In the Old Testament God owned the nation of Israel as His people. They were His chosen ones and He was their God and dwelt in their midst. In the New Testament God forms a Church out of all nations and owns that as His dwelling place and as His people. We have previously pointed out that unity in principle and action is what characterized the New Testament Church. We shall also find that the principle of unity was God's mind for the nation of Israel and that the unity of the twelve tribes was always insisted upon in the Old Testament.

Since we are told in the New Testament that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning," and that things in Israel are ensamples for our admonition and types and a "shadow of good things to come" (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11; Hebrews 10:1), it is important that we notice this principle of unity in Israel. For if the nation of Israel was one, how much more so is the Body of Christ, the Church, one! And if independency was wrong in Israel, how much more so must it be wrong in the Church of God! In seeking to point out examples of the unity of the nation of Israel, we feel that we cannot do better than to quote the words of C. H. Mackintosh who has ably summed the matter up thus: The Nation Was One The cities and tribes were not independent; they were bound up together by a sacred bond of national unity - a unity which had its center in the place of the divine presence. Israel's twelve tribes were indissolubly bound together. The twelve loaves on the golden table in the sanctuary formed the beautiful type of this unity, and every true Israelite owned and rejoiced in this unity. The twelve stones in Jordan's bed, the twelve stones on Jordan's bank, Elijah's twelve stones on Mount Carmel - all set forth the same grand truth the indissoluble unity of Israel's twelve tribes.

"The good king Hezekiah recognized this truth when he commanded that the burnt-offering and the sin-offering should be made for all Israel (2 Chronicles 29:24). The faithful Josiah owned it and acted upon it when he carried his reformatory operations into all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel (2 Chronicles 34:33). Paul, in his magnificent address before king Agrippa, bears witness to the same truth when he says, 'Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come' (Acts 26:7).

"And when we look forward into the bright future, the same glorious truth shines, with heavenly lustre, in the seventh chapter of Revelation, where we see the twelve tribes sealed and secured for blessing, and glory, in connection with a countless multitude of the Gentiles. And finally, in Revelation 21:1-27 we see the names of the twelve tribes engraved on the gates of the holy Jerusalem, the seat and centre of the glory of God and of the Lamb.

"Thus, from the golden table in the sanctuary to the golden city descending out of heaven from God, we have a marvelous chain of evidence in proof of the grand truth of the indissoluble unity of Israel's twelve tribes.

"And then, if the question be asked, where is this unity to be seen? or how did Elijah or Hezekiah or Josiah or Paul see it? The answer is a very simple one-They saw it by faith; they looked within

the sanctuary of God, and there, on the golden table, they beheld the twelve loaves, setting forth the perfect distinctness and yet the perfect oneness of the twelve tribes. Nothing can be more beautiful. The truth of God must stand forever. Israel's unity was seen in the past, and it will be seen in the future; and though like the higher unity of the Church, it is unseen in the present, faith believes it all the same, holds it and confesses it in the face of ten thousand hostile influences." (Notes on Deuteronomy, Vol. 2, pages 165, 166). At Jericho In the matter of the sin of Achan at Jericho, we see God acting in discipline with Israel on the ground of their national unity. When Achan of the tribe of Judah trespassed and took of the accursed things of Jericho, the Lord was angry against Israel and caused them to meet defeat in battle at Ai. When Joshua inquired of the Lord about it, He said, "Israel hath sinned, and they have also trespassed... they have taken of the accursed thing" (Joshua 7:11). The evil was not just a matter that affected Achan or his family or his tribe, but it affected all Israel. God held all Israel responsible for it because all the tribes were one nation. In His sight the whole nation was identified with the sin of Achan and defiled by it. It was not Achan's family or the tribe of Judah that was defiled and held responsible, but all Israel. So "all Israel stoned him with stones" (Joshua 7:25), and put the evil away. Then the Lord's anger turned and He was with Israel again. The same principle applies to the Church of God and to individual Assemblies today. If an individual in an Assembly has sinned, the whole Assembly is thereby defiled and is responsible to deal with it, otherwise God cannot go on with them. So also if evil is allowed in one Assembly, all Assemblies in fellowship with this gathering are defiled by it and must judge the evil. The Church is one as Israel was one and there is a corresponding responsibility. The principles of God never change, so the lesson God taught Israel at Jericho is a lesson for the Church also and is borne out by the teaching of the New Testament.

Evil in a City In Deuteronomy 13:12-15 Israel was instructed as to dealing with a report of idolatry in one of their cities. It was to be investigated and if the report was true and certain, they must smite the inhabitants of that city and destroy it utterly. There was to be no such thing, for example, as any in the south of Israel saying, "What have we to do with the evil in the North or in such and such a city? There is no such evil taught amongst us. Each city is responsible for the maintenance of truth within its own borders. That is a local matter; we do not feel ourselves responsible to meddle with their affairs" etc. To speak thus would have been a denial of Israel's unity. The evil was in a city of Israel and if another city belonged to Israel, the evil was considered to be amongst its inhabitants also. Furthermore, God's distinct commandment was - "If thou shalt hear say... Then shalt thou enquire" etc., so they were bound on the double ground of the nation's unity and the plain command of God to investigate the reported evil and to deal with it. They were told to inquire whether "such abomination is wrought among you" (Deuteronomy 13:14). It was not merely a question of evil in a certain city, but among you - evil in Israel. Evil in one city was the concern of all Israel according to God.

If every city and every tribe were to take independent ground, the high-priest might take the twelve loaves off the golden table before the Lord and scatter them about here and there, for the unity of Israel would be gone. But no such independency was to be allowed in Israel and neither is it God's mind for His Assemblies.

Thus even the instructions to Israel stress the principle of unity and corporate responsibility and action, and coalesce with what we have found in the New Testament to be the path of God for the Church and for Assembly relationships.

02.41. A Circle of Fellowship

"A Circle of Fellowship"

We have pointed out the unity that existed among the New Testament Assemblies in doctrine and in practice and we have seen that no trace of the theory of independent Assemblies is found anywhere in Scripture. The principle of the unity of Assemblies is what God's Word clearly teaches. This is sometimes spoken of as the truth of "a circle of fellowship." By this term is meant a circle of Assemblies holding the same truths, acting on the same divine principles, maintaining corporate responsibilities, and walking together in practical fellowship and unity with each other in order to carry out the principles which bind them together.

All the Scriptures hitherto considered relating to the common life and order of the Assemblies justify the thought and teaching of a circle of Assemblies. While the term is not found in Scripture, it expresses a truth clearly taught in the Word. Of course, such a circle of fellowship primarily includes all saints not Scripturally excluded, but in the present state of ruin and confusion in the professing Church the circle of actual fellowship of Assemblies must be reduced to those who are subject to the truth of God governing His Assembly.

If we have Scriptural authority for a single Assembly gathered in separation from what is contrary to God's Word, which we surely have, we have a circle of fellowship locally, and this circle would properly include all Assemblies likewise Scripturally gathered elsewhere.

Necessary for Order and Discipline A circle of fellowship is a necessity and we must own it and the discipline connected with it if we would be free from the charge of independency. How else can the order and discipline established through the apostle Paul for God's house, the Assembly, be carried out? On the same principle that we recognize a local company of believers gathered in separation from evil, we must recognize a general company of believers—a circle of gatherings. This is not forming a confederacy or setting up a central governing body. In owning a circle of gatherings we make no terms with each other, but simply seek to walk together in obedience to the Word of God. A circle of fellowship is a practical oneness of fellowship which the Spirit of God produces through obedience to the Scriptures. It is the only practical representation of the Body of Christ. The only alternative is to recognize independent Assemblies which would be a denial of the truth of the one body of all believers. Of independency another has well said: "The principle of independent Assemblies leads to latitudinarianism, which allows of every one's will and tries no one's conscience."

Unsectarian Fellowship By many a clamor and cry is raised against the teaching of a circle of fellowship as being sectarian and not of God. But if Christians everywhere are owned as members of the Body of Christ and received into communion wherever a Scriptural hindrance to their reception does not exist, and no sectarian name or certain teaching is adapted as a party badge, but saints are gathered simply to Christ's name alone, such an Assembly of believers is not a party or sect though refusing independency and owning a circle of Assemblies with which they

fellowship.

Another has well written: "The more we lament and refuse the sectarianism which exists, the more we are compelled, and shall rejoice to own the Body of Christ wherever possible. And this circle of fellowship, while it is not the body, furnishes us with the means of owning this in a truthful and holy way, so far as the state of ruin in which the Church exists permits it to be done. With love to all Christ's own - with an open door for the reception of all according to the conditions of truth and holiness - such a circle is not sectarian, but a protest against it, while the meeting that refuses connection with it is sectarian in fullest reality" (F. W. Grant).

We are to recognize the whole Body of Christ, but not the unscriptural associations of believers. In the interests of the Body of Christ, we refuse denominations as not of God, but in the same interests we are bound to accept the circle of unsectarian fellowship. Every Christian has a right to the Lord's Table in a certain way, but he may not in every case be entitled to sit at it: his ways, his associations, or his state of soul may hinder it, for it is the table of the holy and true One. The breaking of bread together at the Lord's Table is the fullest expression of fellowship and fellowship means community of interests and of judgment. Where these do not exist true fellowship is impossible. We cannot fellowship with those who oppose and make war upon the principles which God has given for our guidance. Fellowship can only be extended by an Assembly in one locality to Assemblies in other localities which take up their privileges and act upon their responsibilities according to God's Word while walking in holiness, truth, and unity.

We have discussed the truth of a circle of fellowship and have contended for it as a Scriptural precept. That those who have sought to hold and practice this principle have greatly failed and broken up into various circles is sadly admitted and gives cause for humiliation and confession before God. But this does not prove that the principle of a circle of fellowship is wrong. Man's failure to maintain God's truth does not change divine principles or excuse us from upholding or practicing them. It is rather a reason for humbling ourselves before God in identification with all the ruin and the failure of our fathers and ourselves and should cause us to seek His face for grace and strength to keep His Word and to walk aright.

Those who practice independency of Assemblies and label the teaching of the unity of Assemblies as that which causes divisions have not fared any better - perhaps worse. The baneful fruits of independency are clearly seen.

02.42. Maintaining Practical Unity

Maintaining Practical Unity The truth of the One Body of all believers and of the one Spirit which has formed this divine "unity of the Spirit" necessitates that there must be a practical relationship of unity between local Assemblies of Christians. This is the relationship which the Word of God marks out for Assemblies, as we have seen, and it is the only Scriptural one. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians, which embraces "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:2), the apostle writes: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10) .

Satan is ever busy seeking to destroy this practical unity of judgment and happy fellowship between believers and Assemblies and to promote independency and division among God's people. So we are exhorted to use "diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace". We must make an earnest effort to promote unity and fellowship amongst believers in the local Assembly and amongst the Assemblies in various localities, provinces, and countries. We purpose now to consider some of the things that help to foster and maintain practical unity between Assemblies of believers.

Examples from Scripture

We have but to follow the pattern given us in the divine account of the Apostolic Church in this matter. In the Epistles of Paul, Peter, and John, we notice that at the close Christian greetings are sent, through the apostle, from all the saints of one Assembly to all the saints of the particular Assembly (or to the individual) to whom the Epistle was written. Paul sent salutations to the Corinthians from the Churches of Asia and from Aquila and Priscilla and the Church which was in their house at Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:19). The apostle Paul also told the saints in Rome of the work of the saints in Macedonia and Achaia for the poor saints at Jerusalem (Romans 15:26). And he would stir up the Corinthians and all the saints in Achaia by telling them of the devoted, sacrificial giving of the Churches of Macedonia for the work of ministering to the needy saints (2 Corinthians 8:1-5) . He also told the saints at Corinth of the great opening for the Gospel that was granted unto him at Ephesus and of the many adversaries there (1 Corinthians 16:9). We note, too, that he requested the Assembly at Colosse to see that the Epistle he had sent to them be read also to the Church of the Laodiceans, and that they read the Epistle from Laodicea (Colossians 4:16). In the divine history of the early Church we observe, also, how the apostles, Titus, Timothy, Apollos, and other servants of the Lord visited the Assemblies and in passing from one place to another conveyed news of joy and sorrow to the saints, thereby linking the Assemblies together in a practical way. Peter "passed throughout all quarters" and Barnabas rehearsed to the Church at Antioch all that God had done with them on their first missionary tour and how the door of faith was opened unto the Gentiles and Assemblies formed (Acts 9:32; Acts 14:26-27). Later, when they were sent by the brethren at Antioch to Jerusalem, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, "declaring the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy unto all the brethren." When

they came to the Church at Jerusalem they declared the same (Acts 15:2-4). The foregoing examples from the inspired record of the Apostolic Church manifest the common life, divine affections, and common interests which throbbed throughout the Assemblies and the whole Church. There was the practical demonstration of the truth of the One Body. By exchange of loving greetings, by visits of the Lord's servants from one Assembly to another, and through communications concerning each other's welfare and activities the saints and Assemblies were drawn together and maintained in practical love, fellowship, and unity.

Let God's people do likewise today; let there be interchange of loving greetings and visits between Assemblies. May diligent efforts be put forth by the Lord's servants and by local brethren in visiting and ministering among the Assemblies and making the saints acquainted with the activities, joys, sorrows, and needs of the various gatherings. Then let us all feel and share these joys or burdens and pray for each other. The work of those who give themselves to the service of the Lord and travel about among the Assemblies in the ministry of the Word is a very important and necessary service towards maintaining unity and promoting fellowship between Assemblies. Satan would also seek to use them in sowing discord. Of this they must beware.

Fellowship Meetings and Conferences The convening of special meetings for fellowship, meditation on the Word, and prayer, or conferences, to which nearby and other Assemblies are invited, are a great help in the promotion of practical love, fellowship, and unity among Assemblies. They tend to draw saints closer together and to give new interest, energy, and zeal for the Lord's work. Hearts are refreshed in prayer, by the ministry of the Word, and by spiritual intercourse with other believers and gatherings are thereby strengthened and revived, especially the smaller ones. Isolated saints are also encouraged. Unity of teaching and practice is better maintained by such mutual meditations and discussions in conference and the link of fellowship between Assemblies is made stronger thereby.

Assemblies should be encouraged to conduct such special fellowship meetings and conferences of short duration or of several days length as opportunity affords. National holidays have often been taken advantage of for such general gatherings and much blessing has resulted to the saints.

Letters and Periodicals Where personal fellowship and visitation of the saints and gatherings is not so easily accomplished because of great distances and lack of time and freedom from duties, the writing of letters of brotherly fellowship and encouragement is a great help in promoting practical unity, common interests, and fellowship among saints. Another valuable aid to this end is the publication and circulation of periodicals of ministry and of those giving items of interest concerning the saints and the Assemblies both at home and abroad.

Formation of New Assemblies When a gathering of believers is to be formed in a place, it is well to seek the fellowship of one or more nearby gatherings or at least the Assembly closest to this place. This promotes unity and happiness and the spirit of independency is avoided. Then, if all is in Scriptural order, the older, nearby Assemblies can make known to the Assemblies elsewhere the formation of this new gathering and commend it to their prayerful fellowship. The nearby Assembly or Assemblies should show practical fellowship with this new gathering in their beginning a fresh testimony for the Lord on the ground of the One Body and should help them on in the path by visits and ministry from time to time. By this way of acting in fellowship with another

gathering, the new Assembly learns what it is to act practically on the truth of the One Body and the One Spirit and is taught in the very beginning that it is not an independent unit and cannot act independently of the Church elsewhere. In this connection we would bring to the reader's attention a truth well stated by another: "It is quite clear if two or three are gathered together it is an Assembly, and if Scripturally assembled, an Assembly of God ... But if there be one such, and another set up by man's will independent of it, the first only morally in God's sight is the Assembly of God, and the other is not at all so, because it is set up in independency of the unity of the body" (J. N. Darby).

Thus in forming a new Assembly we must be sure that it is not an independent act, but an action according to the unity of the Body of Christ. Of course, if an Assembly, because of following a continued path of evil and self - will, finally has to be set aside and cut off from fellowship as a leprous house by other Assemblies, it can no longer be considered a Scripturally gathered Assembly. The establishment of a new gathering in such a place, done in fellowship with Assemblies elsewhere, is not an act of independency, but according to the holiness and truth of God's house which demands separation from evil (2 Corinthians 6:17; 2 Timothy 2:20-21). To say, as some do, that there is no Scripture for cutting off an Assembly from fellowship is to say that there is no Scripture for separation from evil.

Letters of Commendation From Acts 18:27, Romans 16:1, 2 Corinthians 3:1, and Colossians 4:10, we learn that it was a practice among the early Christians to give letters of commendation to saints who went from their midst to Assemblies where they were unknown and that they required the same from strangers who came to them for fellowship. Such letters authenticate the bearer as a true believer and as one whose walk is godly. They are a valuable means of introducing a believer to a gathering and assure him a welcome. They are also a safeguard against receiving false brethren. They tend to promote confidence and fellowship between Assemblies and are a great help toward the maintenance of godly order and unity. The letter should be from the Assembly and addressed to the Assembly which is to receive the person.

Great care should be taken not to omit this letter when going to an Assembly where one is a stranger. However, it is clear from 2 Corinthians 3:1 that such letters of commendation are not required of one who is known by a number in a gathering. May the Lord help us as individuals and Assemblies to walk in practical unity as members of the Body of Christ and to maintain "the unity of the Spirit," in the bond of peace. May the true and Scriptural relationship of unity and corporate responsibility and fellowship be maintained between Assemblies.

R. K. Campbell

02.43. CHAPTER 5: In The Day Of Ruin

CHAPTER 5 In The Day Of Ruin

02.44. In The Day Of Ruin

In The Day Of Ruin In our previous chapters we have sought primarily to consider the Church as it was set up by God in the beginning and to learn from Scripture its nature and order and how it should function according to God's mind. We have looked at the Church in its universal character and in its local aspect and have seen what should characterize a Scripturally gathered Assembly of believers locally and in collective relationship with Assemblies elsewhere. We have noted here and there how greatly Christendom has departed from the primitive pattern of the Church as originally instituted by God, and have frequently noticed that the profesesing Church on earth (embracing all that outwardly owns the name of Christ) is in a state of general ruin, decay, and disorder. We shall now consider the Church in the day of ruin and the path of God for the believer amidst this ruin. This condition of the Church's ruin and departure from God's Word was foretold in the New Testament and had already set in in the days of the apostles. This state of ruin is irreparable and will grow worse until finally the Lord will take the true believers, His bride, to heaven and spue the false Church out of His mouth and execute judgment upon it (see Matthew 25:10-12; Revelation 3:16; Revelation 18:1-10; Revelation 19:11-21).

There is no hope given in Scripture for the return of the Church on earth to its Pentecostal, virgin state of purity, unity, and spiritual power. It will, on the contrary, end in the greatest apostacy and idolatry of Babylon the Great and of the antichrist (Revelation 17:1-18 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12). That which becomes the earnest Christian in the day of ruin, then, is not to seek to restore the Church to its Pentecostal state, but to own with sorrow and humiliation before God this true condition of ruin and the low estate of the Church (of which we all form a part) and to contend earnestly for the faith in holiness and love.

02.45. Guidance from Second Timothy Two

Guidance from 2 Timothy 2:1-26

However great the ruin in the Church may become, those who wish to please the Lord and obey His Word need not despair. God, who allowed decay and disorder to begin in the Church in apostolic times, has also given us by His apostles ample guidance and light for the discerning of His path in the day of ruin. Second Thessalonians, Second Peter, John's three Epistles, and Jude all give us guidance and help for the day of decline and apostasy. In addition to the foregoing, we have special and definite guidance for our day in the second Epistle to Timothy which deals especially with this condition of ruin and the last days of the Church. In this Epistle we have the light of God shining upon the increasing gloom and confusion of the professing Church and pointing out His path for the exercised soul in all the ruin. In the first Epistle to Timothy we have the order of things that should prevail in the Assembly and how one should behave in the house of God which is the Church of the living God. The second Epistle to Timothy was written when disorder and evil had come into the outward house of God and there was no power in the Church to deal with it. In this Epistle Timothy was told how to walk and what to do in such disorder, evil, and departure from God's Word. When the first Epistle was written to Timothy the outward Church was the house of God, but when the second Epistle was written the Church on earth had become a great house containing vessels to honor and vessels to dishonor. It then became necessary for one to purify himself by separating from these vessels to dishonor if he would be a vessel to honor and meet for the Master's use. Thus the apostle directs in this last Epistle to Timothy. The subject of the great house of Christendom with its vessels of honor and dishonor and the divine path for the faithful and godly soul is clearly delineated in 2 Timothy 2:19-26. As this Epistle was the last one of 14 divinely inspired ones to come from the apostle Paul (this last one written just before his martyrdom) we have therein, especially in the above mentioned verses, the last instructions of God as to Church truth or Assembly fellowship from the special apostle to the Church. This portion of Scripture is therefore very important and necessitates our special attention. These verses give us divine instruction and guidance as to the path which the individual believer is to pursue when the Church is in disorder, ruin, and apostasy. The Sure Foundation

Before giving instructions as to the divine path which the exercised believer is to follow in the day of evil, the apostle Paul speaks of the sure foundation of God. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." And, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19). The state of things was very bad in the professing Church at the time Paul wrote this Epistle to Timothy. Assemblies were departing from the faith and some individuals were teaching false doctrines and overthrowing the faith of others, as Hymenaeus and Philetus, of whom the apostle speaks in 2 Timothy 2:17-18.

Evil deeds and evil teachings abounded and would increase, but amidst such a confusing and discouraging state of affairs, there is a word of cheer and comfort. Paul could write, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure." In face of the disturbing apostasy he turns to what is

immovable and abiding-the sure foundation of God. What God has established remains as an unchanging, dependable foundation. What is committed to man fails, but what is of God abides untouchable and the believer can rest serenely on that foundation, no matter how great the ruin of the professing Church becomes.

Previously Paul had written to the Corinthians, "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11). He, the eternal Son of God and Son of Man, is that sure foundation, the rock upon which the true Church is built, and against which the gates of hades cannot prevail (Matthew 16:16-18). Christ is the foundation stone which Isaiah prophesied of: "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation" (Isaiah 28:16).

Here in Second Timothy we are not told what the foundation is. The Spirit of God has purposely left it as a general term. Undoubtedly it is Christ Jesus and also embraces all those things that God has given us in Him which are unchangeable and abiding. What a comfort this is for us in the day of apostasy when the foundations of the faith are being undermined and destroyed by evil men. "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen" (2 Corinthians 1:20). Christ and His promises are a sure foundation for the believer to rest upon.

While there are many wonderful things secured for us in Christ, there are three things that are especially prominent and precious.

The abiding presence of Christ with His own in all His fulness and sufficiency, is guaranteed to us. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). This is a precious promise indeed for the day of ruin.

The abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is assured to the believer. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever... He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:16-17).

The Word of God abides for us. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

What encouragement and sustenance for the believer in the day of ruin is found in the abiding presence of the Son of God, the Spirit of God, and the Word of God. Thus the remnant in Haggai's day was also encouraged. "I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts: According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not" (Haggai 2:4-5). The Seal

Affixed to God's sure foundation is a seal with a divine and a human side "having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." This is the divine side. Amid the confusion and evil of Christendom the Lord sees and knows each one who has a living relationship with Himself and is truly His. We do not know all the believers, even in a certain place, but He does. This knowledge of the Lord is what we still have to fall back on as a resource in the present ruin of the Church. The walk of some professing Christians is such that one can have no certainty as to the reality of their profession. Such have to be left with the Lord who knows His own and will manifest in due time those that are truly His and those that are not. On the other hand, those who are true believers and

faithful to the Lord are often misunderstood, slandered, and persecuted by the world or worldly professors because they will not go along with the world and the professing Church in their evil doings. One's ecclesiastical position may be judged and evil spoken of; he may stand alone and be scorned by the Christian community. It is thus a real comfort and steadying power to know that the Lord knows each one who is His and all about their circumstances. He understands when others may doubt us. But there is another side to God's seal, the side of human responsibility. "Let every one who names the name of (the) Lord withdraw from iniquity" (New Trans.). Every one who names the name of the Lord and claims to be a Christian is under real obligation to follow Christ in righteousness and to withdraw himself from all iniquity. If one confesses the name of the Lord, he must walk according to that holy name and not associate it with iniquity or unrighteousness of any kind. As Lord, He claims obedience and submission to His authority.

Separation from evil is always insisted upon throughout the Bible. It is especially stressed as a prime necessity for the godly soul in days of ruin. Thereby one gives a visible proof of the activity of a divine nature that hates evil and loves good and desires to obey and honor the Lord. "Cease to do evil; Learn to do well" (Isaiah 1:16-17); this is ever God's order. The first step is to separate from evil and then God will teach that one His will and will show him the next step.

Anything that is not subject to the entire will of God is iniquity. It may be a certain thing or it may be a religious system that is iniquity for one and must be departed from. Sometimes iniquity seems very nice to the human heart, but if it is in opposition to the revealed will of God and contrary to His Word, it is evil and must be separated from. The Great House

"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor" (2 Timothy 2:20). The apostle here uses the figure of a great house with its various vessels of honor and dishonor. This is a picture of what the professing Church was becoming when Paul wrote this Epistle. It could no longer be characterized as "the house of God... the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth," as it was when the first Epistle to Timothy was written (1 Timothy 3:15). Then the Church held forth the truth before the world as a pillar, but now false doctrines were taught by some in it, unsaved ones had gotten in, and there was much confusion, mixture, and evil in the professing house of God Genesis 1:11

What claimed to be the house of God was fast becoming like what is found amongst men on earth—a great house of mixed vessels. It no longer had that exclusively divine stamp of being God's house and characterized by holiness and righteousness. It had lost its character of holiness and truth. Such was the state of the professing Church at the end of Paul's life and this condition of things has continued and developed intensely since then, so that Christendom is today more than ever a great house of mixed vessels, some to honor and some to dishonor.

Vessels of gold and silver are the vessels proper to the service of the house of God. Nebuchadnezzar had once taken the vessels of gold and silver from the temple at Jerusalem and carried them to Babylon (Daniel 5:2-3). Vessels of wood and earth ought not to be in the house of God. From Romans 9:21-23 we learn that vessels to dishonor are "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" and vessels of honor are "vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory." Thus, generally speaking, vessels of gold and of silver would represent true Christians; they are vessels to honor—"vessels of mercy," while vessels of wood and of earth would symbolize unconverted professors in the church—vessels to dishonor and of wrath.

However, a golden vessel of honor may be used to dishonor, as Belshazzar did when he used the sacred vessels of the temple at his idolatrous feast. Likewise in the great house of Christendom, where the vessels represent persons, a real believer in the Lord may do something dishonoring to the Lord or be associated with vessels to dishonor and thus become a vessel of dishonor. The Lord cannot approve of the service of one associated with evil, therefore the condition of separation from vessels to dishonor is laid down in 2 Timothy 2:21 as a necessity for being a vessel unto honor.

Such, then, is the divine picture of the professing Church with its unholy mixture of saved and unsaved, true and false believers. This is its state in the day of ruin. The whole of that which calls itself Christian is looked at as a great house of mixed vessels. Every Christian is of it outwardly in spite of however true may be his heart and purposes toward the Lord, for the great house is all that calls itself Christian. But the earnest and faithful believer is called to cleanse himself, personally, from all vessels to dishonor in the house, though he can never go out of the house itself.

Purging Oneself

"If therefore one shall have purified himself from these, (in separating himself from them), he shall be a vessel to honor, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work" (2 Timothy 2:21, New Trans.). When Christendom no longer answers to the character of the Assembly as God formed it, the call is for individual faithfulness and the responsibility of the individual believer to separate himself from whatever is contrary to the honor of Christ is stressed. The individual is here addressed and called to purify himself from the vessels of dishonor by separating from them.

If one would be a vessel unto honor and serviceable to the Master, he must stand apart and not defile himself with what is false, corrupt, and contrary to God's Word. One cannot be in association with those who dishonor Christ, deny His deity or perfect humanity, hold other evil doctrine, or allow evil in practice, and at the same time seek to honor the Lord in one's walk and be a sanctified vessel for the Master's use. No believer can rightly serve the Lord while connected with evil or maintaining an association with a religious system or a congregation where evil is allowed or where unsaved persons (who are vessels to dishonor) are members. One must be a clean vessel before the Lord can use him, and the condition necessary for being a sanctified, serviceable vessel, ready for the Master's use, is plainly stated here as separation from vessels to dishonor.

If an Assembly does not purge evil out of its midst, as commanded in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, the faithful believer, after due warning and patience have been exercised, must purge himself out of it. One cannot have fellowship with evil and be a clean vessel. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." It is when separated from evil that one understands what the holiness of God is, what His claims upon us are, and how incompatible His nature is with evil. Of course, those who seek to obey God's command to separate from vessels to dishonor, from iniquity, and all that is contrary to God's Word, are often much opposed and condemned. As it was in Isaiah's day, so it is now: "truth is fallen in the street... Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey" (Isaiah 59:14-15). Godly separation costs much, but also gains much. The pain of separation and the reproach of it must be borne if one would please the Lord above all others and be a vessel meet for the Master's use.

Then one learns that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22). The obedient soul will find that he is brought into rich blessings and fresh power for his own soul.

Some may stress the unity of the Assembly and cleave to the allowance of evil under the plea of not breaking the unity and causing division, but such thoughts are rebuked and set aside by the authoritative words of the apostle, "purge himself from these." When failure and evil has set in within the Church, there is danger lest the desire for outward unity should persuade even the faithful believer to accept evil and walk in fellowship with it rather than break this unity. But 2 Timothy 2:21 establishes the principle of individual faithfulness and individual responsibility to separate from evil, and sets it above all other considerations. Unity is never to be had at the expense of truth or righteousness, for that is contrary to the very nature of God who is light. In the day of ruin separation from evil is stressed above outward unity.

Some teach and advocate that one should remain in a Church or Assembly (even though things are not right and are contrary to God's Word) and seek to do all the good there that one can so as to improve the situation, or that one should stand as a witness for the Lord in that place. In view of the Scripture we have been considering, it should be apparent to our readers how erroneous and contrary to the direction of God this teaching is. One can only be a clean vessel, serviceable to the Master and prepared for every good work when in separation from vessels of dishonor. Then the Lord can use one in blessing to souls. One must first be out of a swamp before he can help one who is in it. In the evil days in which Jeremiah lived, God said to him: "If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them" (Jeremiah 15:19). Jeremiah was enjoying God's Word in his heart and said, "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand" (Jeremiah 15:16-17). Thus God could use him to separate precious souls from the evil of Israel and would use him as His mouth to speak His Word. But he must not return to that from which he had separated. "Let them return unto thee."

Another strong command to separate is found in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 : "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." May every reader heed these words of exhortation and encouragement and walk faithfully for Christ amidst the evil of professing Christendom.

Personal Conduct

"Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, Charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). We have seen from the previous verse that separation from vessels to dishonor in the great house of Christendom is necessary if one would be a clean vessel and prepared unto every good work. Now the apostle warns against personal dangers when one might be absorbed with public evils and occupied with necessary separation from them. The individual believer is here exhorted as to his personal conduct and the personal graces which he must follow as a separated vessel. We are not only to be occupied with the negative side of separation from evil, but must maintain the positive side of pursuing righteousness, faith, love, and

peace with other believers like-minded. In separating from ecclesiastical evils in the Church, it is of greatest importance that the believer watch his own conduct and maintain a practical walk in righteousness and Christ-likeness. It is vain to testify against evil and separate from it if one fails in personal conduct that is plainly seen and rightly branded as unchristian by those ensnared in iniquity and from whom one has separated. Therefore the apostle here earnestly urges Timothy, and every believer who would be faithful, to beware of that which would hinder and nullify one's testimony in separating from evil.

Youthful lusts must be shunned. Not only are worldly and fleshly lusts to be avoided, but the lusts characteristic of youth, such as self-confidence, lightness, impatience, impetuosity, independence, show of knowledge, and being argumentative are to be shunned. All these things so natural to youth, may come up in an older believer and spoil his testimony. A vessel unto honor must not be characterized by these lusts typical of youth in its self-sufficiency. He must flee from any tendency to give way to these youthful lusts and avoid anything that would manifest the lack of a sober, meek, and humble spirit which characterizes one who walks with God. The separated believer must follow righteousness, faith, love, and peace. One must walk in practical righteousness, which is pursuing what is right and proper before God and man and acting consistently. We should notice that righteousness is listed first, then faith, then love, and that peace is last. Righteousness is the first consideration, not love and peace. If one thinks of love and peace as the first consideration he may be in danger of compromising the truth and sacrificing righteousness. Evil may be tolerated under the pretext of love and with the desire for peace. We are to follow love and peace, but we cannot have peace at the expense of righteousness, therefore we must pursue righteousness first and foremost. There can be no peace with evil or with the enemies of Christ.

Faith must also be pursued along with righteousness as this keeps one in communion with God and in dependence upon Him to sustain the heart in the path of righteousness and separation from evil. Faith keeps God before the soul and prevents one from looking at things from the standpoint of mere human expediency and reasoning. Faith is necessary for endurance in the path of righteousness. Moses "endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27).

Without faith and love our pursuing righteousness is likely to become a cold and legal thing and savor of Pharisaism. Therefore faith and love must be coupled with righteousness. Faith comes before love in the verse before us, for the eye must be on God, the fountain of love, before there can be true Christian love in activity. Love must be guarded by righteousness and faith. There can be no true love apart from obedience. True love to Christ and to souls will cause one to walk in righteousness and faith. When faith is active, God will be before the soul, His love will fill the heart, and one's walk will be characterized by divine love. This is very necessary for the vessel of honor. He must follow love and manifest the love of Christ in all his dealings.

Then the result of following after righteousness, faith, and love will be peace-peace on a righteous basis. The separated believer must not push his own will and engender strife, but "follow after the things which make for peace." "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 14:19; Romans 12:18). A contentious, troublesome person is a dishonor to Christ and manifests that he is not following righteousness, faith, love, and peace.

2 Timothy 2:23-25 give us further instructions as to the personal conduct that should characterize a sanctified vessel unto honor. He is to avoid foolish and unlearned questions that engender strife

and is not to strive with anyone, "but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." Argument and strife over the truth or upon foolish questions are of no avail or profit. The truth of God should be clearly and graciously stated and taught in all patience, gentleness, and meekness, even to those who oppose, but the servant of the Lord must not strive with those that resist the truth.

Such are the instructions for the personal conduct of believers who seek to please the Lord and to be sanctified and serviceable vessels unto honor amidst the ruin of the great house of Christendom. May the Lord give us grace to be thus characterized. Who to Associate With

Returning to 2 Timothy 2:22, we notice that the separated believer is not only to follow righteousness, faith, love, and peace, individually, but "with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." He is encouraged to follow these graces in personal association and fellowship. with others who are doing the same and calling on the Lord out of pure hearts. The faithful believer is thus given to expect the companionship of others in the path of separation from vessels unto dishonor. As he, by divine instinct, loves the communion of saints, he is hereby cheered by the prospect of having fellowship with other Christians in the new path to which faithfulness to God and His_ Word has called him.

One need not fear isolation as a result of separation from evil, nor should a believer choose to remain alone. God will work in the hearts of others and lead them to likewise separate from iniquity and to pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, calling on the Lord out of a pure heart. With such who do so, we are called to associate ourselves in Christian fellowship. This is the path and circle of fellowship according to the mind of God for the earnest believer in the day of ruin.

There may be only two or three in a place who answer to these moral features. If so, they are not to be despised, but recognized as those in whose hearts the Lord has likewise wrought a desire and purpose to do His will, and as those with whom I am to walk in happy fellowship. Another has well written, "He that has not a heart for the two or three must be only a dead weight if he were among ten thousand" (W. Kelly). Numbers look great to the worldly spirit, but they must not influence one who would be faithful to Christ. The Lord foresaw and graciously provided for just such conditions as have arisen in the dark days of evil in the professing Church. Therefore, He promised that "where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). He knew that it would come down to this-that there might be only two or three in a place that would be willing to meet His approval and obey His Word-so He has tenderly and lovingly guaranteed His presence to them as they gather to His Name alone. How comforting and how precious! What more could be desired?

We would here stress that isolation and remaining alone without association and fellowship with other believers is not the path of God for any Christian at any time. One is not to go on with evil and neither is he to stand alone and refuse identification with other believers. 2 Timothy 2:22 clearly teaches this. God's will is that we "follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." One may not find anyone in the particular place where he lives with whom he can Scripturally gather, but the Lord will surely provide some believers elsewhere with whom he can walk in righteous fellowship.

Some would take the ground that conditions have become so bad in the Church that there is no company of believers left with whom one can have fellowship in righteousness, etc., so they stand alone and apart from everything. This is surely contrary to Scripture and we fear that it manifests a spirit of pride that considers oneself superior to everyone and everything else. When Elijah thought he was the only one standing for God, he had to learn that there were 7000 who has not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:14-18). God has always maintained a remnant of faithful believers as a testimony for Himself in every age. As a separated believer, then, one is to fellowship with those who are marked out as following righteousness, faith, love, and peace, and maintaining corporate purity of heart. This is the company with whom the sincere believer is to walk. Those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart are those who are clearly manifested as such by the above characteristics. We can only discern the heart by the practical life.

Another has written on the verse before us as follows: "That which is in the mind of the Spirit of God here, is collective purity; that is, a purity marking the association. Those who are gathered together in the association which is spoken of here are those who meet on the ground of the Word of God with a devotedness and affection for the Lord Jesus Christ, seeking the maintenance of His name, His truth, and His honor; in the non-toleration of every thing that would be unsuitable to Him. That is, I believe, what the apostle speaks of when he says, 'Them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart:' purity of heart, integrity of heart, and personal devotedness to Christ, are the characteristic marks of the association that I am bound to seek when I have individually purged myself" (W. T. Turpin).

Having found this Scriptural fellowship, this position is to be maintained in patience, gentleness, and meekness as stated in 2 Timothy 2:23-25, which we have previously spoken of in connection with "Personal Conduct."

Truly we have sufficient and comforting guidance from Second Timothy two as to the path of God for the day of ruin. May reader and writer be found in that path till He comes.

02.46. Outside the Camp

Outside the Camp At the close of the Epistle to the Hebrews, after so wonderfully setting forth the fulness of Christ's person and work for the believer, the inspired writer says: "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Hebrews 13:12-13). Here we have another important principle for the guidance of the exercised believer in the day of the Church's ruin. We will need to carefully consider this weighty truth. The apostle draws attention in these verses to the fact that Christ was crucified outside the gate of Jerusalem, the center of Judaism, and therefore the believer is exhorted to go forth unto Him, the rejected One, outside the camp and to bear His reproach. But before we consider the above portion of Scripture it will be helpful to a clearer understanding of our subject to first consider the camp of Israel and the example which Moses set in pitching the tent of meeting outside the camp.

Idolatrous Camp of Israel In Exodus 32:1-35 where we find the camp of Israel spoken of we notice that when God was displaced in that camp by the idolatry of the golden calf, He was angry and judgment was executed upon the people (Exodus 32:10, Exodus 32:27-28). The camp of Israel had been owned of God and He had dwelt in their midst, but when the golden calf was set up and worshipped, He could not own them as His people.

Man had been busy with his graving tool fashioning a god, making an altar of his own, appointing his own feast day, sacrificing offerings, and sitting down to eat, drink, and play (Exodus 32:4-6). The people had corrupted themselves and God could not meet with them in that idolatrous camp. In Exodus 33:1-23 we see Moses sensing what became God's holiness in such evil and how he acted in separation from the camp of Israel. "And Moses took the tent, and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and called it the Tent of meeting. And it came to pass (that) every one who sought Jehovah went out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp ... And it came to pass when Moses entered into the tent, the pillar of cloud descended, and stood at the entrance of the tent, and (Jehovah) talked with Moses ... And Jehovah spoke with Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend" (Exodus 33:7-11, New Trans.).

Here we have an example of what it means to go outside the camp and of how necessary this is if we would have the Lord's presence with us in the day of apostacy and evil in the camp. The Lord was now outside of the camp of Israel, so Moses separated himself from it and pitched the tent (probably his own tent) outside of the idolatrous camp. Notice, he not only went outside of Israel's encampment, but "far from the camp" and called this separated tent the "Tent of meeting." This tent now became the center of gathering for all who sought Jehovah and they went forth unto it outside the corrupted camp. Then the Lord put His stamp of approval upon Moses' action and that of some of the people and upon this new gathering place by the pillar of cloud (visible symbol of God's presence) descending and standing at the entrance of the tent of meeting and by His speaking with Moses face to face in the intimacy of friend to friend.

All the people in the camp saw the pillar of cloud stand at the tent of meeting and stood up to worship in their tent doors, showing they realized that the Lord could no longer vouchsafe His presence to the camp defiled by idolatry, and that He owned the new place of gathering outside the camp. And yet it would seem that the majority failed to act in separation from the defiled camp, for they "worshipped, every man in his tent door" (Exodus 33:10), instead of going out to the tent of meeting outside the camp. The application of all this to the present state of Christendom should be quite apparent to any exercised soul. In addition to the direct exhortation in Hebrews 13:13 to go forth unto Christ without the camp, we have the statement in Romans 15:4 that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning," so we know that the example of Moses and others in separating from the idolatry and evil in the camp of Israel furnishes the believer with a principle for guidance in a day when the professing Church is in ruin.

Christendom has become an idolatrous camp like the camp of Israel. Christ has been displaced and idolatry is practiced in a great part of the professing Church. Man has been busy with his graving tool and has fashioned gods of his own.

Systems of religion have been formed without regard to God's mind for His Church as revealed in the Scriptures and the authority of Christ and the sovereign operation of the Holy Spirit have been practically set aside by man's systems.

Every form of evil doctrine and moral evil can be found in Christendom which has become a "Babylon" of confusion and corruption. Revelation 18:1-24 gives us a prophetic picture of this Babylon in its final stage and full development of evil, and tells us of the judgment which God will execute upon it. There we read, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird . . . Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins" (Revelation 18:2, Revelation 18:4).

Like Moses of old, we must go outside of this idolatrous camp and separate ourselves afar off from all its evils and corruption if we would meet the Lord's approval and enjoy His presence with us. How sad to see many true believers clinging to the various systems in the corrupt camp of Christendom, instead of going forth without the camp. Like many in Israel, they worship in their own tent doors in the apostate camp from which Christ has departed. Should this be true of anyone reading these lines, we pray that God's voice may be heard saying, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins. The Camp of Judaism

Now we shall consider this camp which the apostle in Hebrews 13:13 exhorted the Hebrew believers to go outside of unto Jesus Christ who suffered without its gate as the true sin-offering. The inspired writer shows that Christ is outside of this apostate, religious camp of Judaism, therefore those who love Him are to "go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." This was the third time that the glory of God was outside of Israel: first, in the wilderness as we have seen in Exodus 33:1-23; secondly, in Jerusalem in the days of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 10:18-19; Ezekiel 11:23) ; and thirdly, at the crucifixion of Christ in whom the glory of God was manifested to faith in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). Thus those who would seek the Lord and enjoy His presence must go forth unto Him in the place of rejection and reproach where the religious world of His day put Him-outside its camp.

It may be well for us to inquire as to the nature of the camp of Judaism outside of which Christ was put. In Hebrews 9:1-10 we have a description of this camp, from which we gather the following distinguishing features:

It was marked by a "worldly sanctuary," a sanctuary of this world, with majestic furniture and vessels (Hebrews 9:2-3).

There was an inner part in this earthly sanctuary, known as "the Holiest of all," with a veil between it and the rest of the sanctuary. The priests went into the first part of the tabernacle to accomplish the service of God, but into "the Holiest of all" only the high priest could enter once a year with blood for his sins and those of the people (Hebrews 9:3-7). God was shut in and man was shut out.

Thus there was no free access to God under this system of worship. "The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest" (Hebrews 9:8).

There was an ordained priesthood, an order of priests distinct from the people, who devoted themselves to the service of the sanctuary and officiated between the people and God. The people had no direct part in the service of the sanctuary (Hebrews 9:6).

This worldly sanctuary with its priests and sacrifices could not give the worshippers a purged conscience or make the offerers perfect or complete before God (Hebrews 9:9; Hebrews 10:1-3).

It was a system of worship ordained of God for the nation of Israel in the flesh and embraced as worshippers all the nation in the camp. It did not suppose or require that the worshippers should be born again. They were thus a mixed company of believers and unbelievers on the ground of law-keeping for righteousness (Hebrews 3:1-19; Hebrews 4:1-16).

It was an earthly religion, established on earth and suited to man in the flesh, with no thought of any reproach connected with it (Galatians 5:11; Galatians 6:12-13).

The foregoing is a brief outline of the leading features of the camp of Judaism, which we would ask the reader to keep in mind, as we shall shortly refer to these features when we consider the contrasting characteristics of the true Christian portion and position and the similarity of the present camp of Christendom to Judaism.

Into this camp of Judaism God sent His Son, the promised Messiah, but He was rejected and slain outside the gates of its metropolis, Jerusalem. The cross of Christ put an end to the religious system of this camp with its types and shadows, and brought in the new covenant of grace and an accomplished redemption in Christ. However, God bore with the nation until the stoning of Stephen. Then Israel was fully set aside as a nation and the camp of Judaism was entirely disowned by God. But true believers in Christ still clung to Judaism and some Hebrew believers were in danger of giving up the Christian profession and going back into this camp. Therefore, the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, some 30 years after the cross, directing them to the fulness of blessing in Christ and His work and exhorting them to go forth unto Christ without the apostate, rejected camp of Judaism. This is the Church's proper place, for the new wine of Christianity cannot be put into the old bottles of the legal system of the camp (Luke 5:37-38). One cannot follow Christ and worship Him where He is rejected.

Contrast of Christianity On the foundation of the one perfect, complete, and atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross, God formed the Church on the day of Pentecost by the descent and baptism of the Holy Spirit and instituted Christianity in its heavenly character as that which He owned and delighted in. This, in its true characteristics as given in the Scriptures, is the exact opposite of the features we have noted as characteristic of the camp of Judaism. Briefly, the contrasting points of Christianity (which the reader may compare with the correspondingly numbered points previously listed as typical of Judaism) are as follows:

The Christian's sanctuary is in heaven and not on earth. Christ has gone into heaven itself and appears in the presence of God for us as a minister of the heavenly sanctuary and true tabernacle (Hebrews 8:2; Hebrews 9:24).

The veil into the holiest of all is rent and we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, through the rent veil (Hebrews 10:19-20). God has come out to man in Christ, and Christ has gone in to God for the believer and opened the way for us to enter into the holiest also. Inside the veil of the heavenly sanctuary is the place that belongs to every Christian.

3. Thus there is full access to God. "Through him we both (Jew and Gentile) have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Ephesians 2:18).

Every believer in Christ is holy and is a royal priest, privileged to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God. There is no special class of priests distinct from the people in New Testament Christianity (1 Peter 2:5; 1 Peter 2:9).

Through the one perfect and complete offering of Christ believers have purged consciences, are sanctified and perfected for ever before God, and are assured that their sins and iniquities are remembered no more (Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 10:10; Hebrews 10:14-17).

The Church of Christ is composed of a people in vital relationship to God by new birth. It does not embrace any who have only a mere outward relationship to God by natural birth, as in Israel. Only those who have been "born again" are in the Church and able to "worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 3:3; John 4:24). There is no mixture of saved and unsaved in the worship of the true Church.

Christianity is distinctly heavenly. "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Php 3:20, R. V.). It is, therefore, not suited to man in the flesh, but is an offence to the natural man. Thus the reproach of the cross and the rejection of Christ are connected with true Christian worship. "As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised (Judaism) ; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ" (Galatians 6:12).

Such are some of the leading features of New Testament Christianity in contrast to the camp of Judaism. True Christianity is thus not a religious camp on earth, but a called out company of believers, united to Christ, their glorified head, in heaven. Unto Him believers are to go forth without the camp of earthly religion. The Camp of Christendom

We have noted the characteristics and position of true Christianity, which a study of the New Testament will show were manifested in the apostolic Church. But a glance at the history of the professing Church since then and at its present condition reveals the sad fact that it soon lost its heavenly character and the distinctive features of the proper Christian position. That which bore

the name of Christianity and the Church, which we may call "Christendom," soon settled down on earth and became an amalgamation of Judaism and Christianity. The Church soon became Judaized; the principles of Judaism, a religion suited to the unregenerate man in the flesh, were adopted with a little of the truth of Christianity mixed in. Christendom thus soon became a religious camp on earth, similar to the idolatrous camp of Israel in Moses' day and to the apostate camp of Judaism.

Recall the principal features of Judaism and note how they characterize more or less the various religious systems of Christendom. Some of the features are as follows:

They have an earthly sanctuary with majestic appearance, furniture, and vessels, all pleasing to the eye of flesh.

There is the railed off inner shrine into which the officiating priest or minister only goes.

There is no direct, free access to God. God is in the distance and addressed as "Almighty God," "Most High," etc., but rarely as "Abba Father," which is the adoption cry of the true child of God (Galatians 4:5-6). This in itself manifests the "far off" position of Judaism.

There is an ordained, special class of priests and ministers who generally serve under the direction of higher officials and who stand between God and the people, making a division between the so-called "laity" and the "clergy." The leadership and presidency of the Holy Spirit is thus set aside by man's organization and leadership.

A purged conscience, the knowledge of sins forgiven and of acceptance before God, is generally not known. Yea, to say that one is saved and sure of heaven is termed presumption and not possible by most of Christendom.

Believers and unbelievers in heart, converted and unregenerate, are together as public worshippers on the ground of works and law-keeping for salvation.

These systems recognize man in the flesh, appeal to man in the flesh, and are so constituted as to embrace man in the flesh. Hence there is no offence to the natural man or any reproach of Christ and His cross to bear.

Such are the characteristic features of Christendom which is as truly an apostate, religious camp as Judaism was, and perhaps more so. Therefore, the religious systems of Christendom are the camp which believers in this dispensation of grace are called to go outside of unto Christ, God's true gathering center. As to what constitutes the camp, another has well said:

"It is anything where Christ is in name, but not in reality, enthroned supreme. I care not how ancient the authority may be... Wherever there is a human organization which displaces Christ, which is not according to the Word of God as given us in the New Testament, above all, wherever Christ is not directly and immediately recognized in absolute control by His Word and Spirit-there you have the camp." (S. Ridout). The camp, which believers today are called to go outside of, is Christendom where men have revived Jewish elements in the guise of grace. Any system where man's authority is set up to the practical denial of the authority of Christ (which is done wherever the "clergy" is recognized as distinct from the "laity") is a camp to be departed from. The camp is a system of earthly or fleshly religion set up by man-a place where God is dishonored, His Word set

aside, and where man is allowed a place to do what he likes.

We trust these remarks will help our readers to see what the camp of our present day is and enable them to better understand what is meant by Hebrews 13:13 : "Let us go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." And may each one who thus understands be energized by the Holy Spirit to act upon this divine precept. It is only there in separation from all that displaces and dishonors Christ, that His sweet presence can be enjoyed and worship in spirit and in truth truly known. Outside the camp in rejection with Christ below is what answers to our heavenly portion with Him on high. To truly enter within the veil as a worshipper, we must go outside the camp with Christ here on this earth. This is a great and necessary principle for the exercised believer to act upon in the day of the Church's ruin and disorder.

Go Forth Unto Christ

We would stress that going forth unto Christ is the positive side of this separation from the camp and that which should be the true motive and object in disassociation from the camp. This alone will sustain one in the negative path of separation with its trials and heartaches. Christ in all His beauties, glories, and sufficiency must be the object before the heart and the One whom the soul desires and separates unto. Thus it is that the writer of Hebrews presents throughout the Epistle the glories and all-sufficiency of Christ and His work before calling upon them in the last chapter to separate from the camp of Judaism. The soul must long after Christ and desire to walk with Him and to be under His direction and under the control of the Holy Spirit. Separation in any other way will fall short of going forth unto Christ without the camp. If one only separates from a system of religion because of evils there, he may form another system, or become part of a system with more truth and holiness, but still a system where Christ is not the gathering center alone and where He is not given the supreme place of rule by the unhampered action of the Holy Spirit. Thus he is still a part of the camp of Christendom, though perhaps on the outer edge of it. Like Moses, we must pitch our tent "afar off from the camp" (Exodus 33:7) and gather fully unto Christ. May reader and writer know more of this blessed place with Christ outside the camp.

02.47. The Shipwreck of Act_27:1-44

The Shipwreck of Acts 27:1-44

It is not without significance that the book of Acts, which begins with the formation of the Church on the day of Pentecost and continues with the narration of its early days of power and progress, should close with details of a voyage to Rome which ends in a shipwreck and in the imprisonment of the apostle Paul at Rome. We believe that the detailed description of this voyage, shipwreck, and imprisonment of Paul, who was the special apostle to the Church, gives us a symbolic picture of the journey of the professing Church from its apostolic glory and power to its last days of ruin, shipwreck, and enslavement by papal Rome. Surely the Spirit of God would not record for us all the details of this journey and shipwreck if they were only of historical value. He would have us gather spiritual instruction there from as well as facts, for "Every scripture (is) divinely inspired, and profitable for teaching" (2 Timothy 3:16, New Trans.). Our purpose is not to point out all the symbolical details of this journey which find their counterpart in the history of the professing Church, but to obtain encouragement and guidance therefrom for our pathway in the day of the Church's ruin and approaching shipwreck. We will, however, first notice a few things which give us a typical picture of the downward journey of the Church.

Steps Toward Shipwreck

Here, as elsewhere in the Word, the meaning of names unlocks for us spiritual instruction. The name of the town from which the journey was started was "Adramyttium," which means "not in the race." Hebrews 12:1-2 tells us of the race we are to run to the heavenly goal. It is evident, then, that when the Church ceased to run in the heavenly race, but settled down on earth instead, it began the journey which ends in shipwreck. In Acts 27:2 we read of one Aristarchus being in the company on board ship. His name means "the best ruler," but we hear no more of him throughout the journey. Surely the best ruler for the Church is the Holy Spirit, but His rule and guidance were soon set aside by the professing Church and human organization and rule substituted. Sidon and Cyprus, places touched in the journey, mean "taking the prey" and "blossom," which suggests how the Church settled down in the world, seeking possessions, and became occupied with nature, the old creation, instead of realizing the new creation in Christ Jesus. The second ship of Alexandria, in which the journey is resumed, is from Egypt and speaks of this world in its independence of God. We know that the Church soon joined hands with the world and adopted its principles instead of walking in separation from it. This ship is the one which is completely broken to pieces later on. During the voyage the apostle Paul admonished them and warned of coming disaster, but his advice was not heeded. So too, the Church has had the warnings of apostles, which are recorded for us in the Scriptures, but they have been unheeded and the professing Church goes on to ruin and shipwreck. No Hope of Recovery

Next we read of the tempestuous wind that arose and of the efforts put forth to preserve the ship. This tempest may speak of Satan's opposition which the Church encounters. "And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be

saved was then taken away" (v. 20). Everything was dark and hopeless and such is the outlook of the professing Church today. The darkness of evil teaching, apostacy, and moral ruin increases and there is no hope of recovery. The prophetic Scriptures point us to such a scene of darkness and evil in the last days of Christendom.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-17, 2 Timothy 3:1-17, 2 Peter 2:1-22, and the Epistle of Jude all describe these days of darkness, increasing evil, and hopeless conditions.

Encouragement and Testimony of Paul But amidst the darkness there is cheer and encouragement for those who truly belong to the Lord. During the storm the angel of God appeared to Paul telling him to fear not, that he would be brought before Caesar and that God had given him all that were sailing with him (Acts 27:22-25). Thus we see again that the Lord never forsakes His own, but encourages them in the dark days of ruin and despair. So in our day of the Church's ruin and darkness we are to realize the Lord's presence with us and to be of good cheer.

Himself encouraged and strengthened by the Lord's presence and message of cheer and assurance, Paul exhorted his shipmates to be of good cheer and testified to them of the Lord. "There stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve." He stated clearly to whom he belonged and whom he served. So should every believer testify for the Lord to his associates and tell them of salvation, safety, and cheer in Christ. Paul further testified, "for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." He definitely declared his faith in the word of the Lord. Amidst the unbelief and apostacy of our day we, too, should tell men and women "I believe God. It shall be even as the Scriptures tell us." Whether people believe the Bible or not, we should state unequivocally, "I believe God," and warn them of coming judgment.

There was also encouragement for Paul in the assurance that God had given him all that sailed with him. Applying this spiritually to our present day we need not stand alone and despair, but should faithfully testify of the Lord and count upon God to give us souls to sail with us to the port of heaven. We are not to be occupied with the declension, darkness, and ruin of the Church and to be despondent, but are to walk with the Lord giving out the message of cheer and salvation in Christ and looking for souls to be saved and to journey with us. The ship was to perish, as Paul was told, but there would be no loss of life. So the professing Church as a vessel of testimony will end in shipwreck, but the Lord will take out of it unto Himself in glory every true believer. All that sail with Paul, those who belong to Christ and believe God as he did, will safely reach Immanuel's land.

Four Anchors

"Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day" (Acts 27:29). Thereby they were kept safely from the rocks and shipwreck during the night. Here we have an important example and illustration of the way of safety for us in our day amidst the storms of Satan's opposition. There are many rocks about us which will make shipwreck of our faith if we fall upon them. Writing to Timothy, Paul charged him to maintain "faith and a good conscience; which (last) some, having put away, have made shipwreck as to faith" (1 Timothy 1:19, New Trans.). In order to be kept and preserved during the dark night of apostacy, we likewise need to have four anchors and to have our souls firmly anchored by them. We believe that the Epistle of Jude, which pictures the darkness of the last days of Christendom, gives us that

which answers to the four anchors of Acts 27:29.

After speaking of the awful apostasy and evil, Jude turns to the believers and tells them to do four things. "But ye, beloved, (1) building up yourselves on your most holy faith, (2) praying in the Holy Ghost. (3) Keep yourselves in the love of God, (4) looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Acts 27:20). These are four necessary things for the evil day; they are strong, practical exercises of soul which will keep us from the rocks of evil about and from making shipwreck of faith.

First of all, we must build up ourselves on our most holy faith. We need to cleave to the truth in all its sanctifying and preserving power and not to lower the standard of truth one particle. To the Ephesian elders Paul said, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance" (Acts 20:32). It is the Word of God that builds up and makes us strong and firm. We must feed upon it, act upon it, and build up ourselves with it upon the ground of our most holy faith. This is a real anchor for our souls.

Secondly, we need the anchor of "praying in the Holy Ghost." This is the most important spiritual action that could be in any believer. Prayer in the Spirit is the necessary balance to feeding on the Word and keeps the soul fresh before God and in communion with Him. For prayer in the Spirit there must be a walk in the Spirit and self-judgment exercised. Prayer is the Christian's resource and source of power at all times; it is a special stay of support and means of encouragement in dark days of ruin and disorder.

Thirdly, we need to keep ourselves in the love of God. In doing so, we will have a real anchor for our souls in the day of Satan's power and activity of evil. It is not that we are to love God, which we surely should, but we are to keep our souls in the enjoyment of His love. It is like keeping ourselves in the sunshine; it is healthy and provides warmth and cheer. This means that we must always have confidence in God and never doubt His love, no matter what the circumstances or trials may be. Nothing can altar His love towards us, not even our own failures, though for the enjoyment of His love we must walk in the Spirit so that there will be the conscious realization of it in our souls. Satan ever seeks to get us to doubt God's love and to come between our souls and His love. But keeping ourselves submerged in the unfailing and unchangeable love of God will anchor our souls firmly against every wind and wave of Satan and preserve us from shipwreck. As a fourth anchor we are exhorted to be "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." This is the bright outlook-the mercy of the Lord all along the way to the very end, His coming for us, which will bring us into the fulness of eternal life. Because of the great need of the evil day, because of the distress, weakness, and everything that would cause one to be downcast, the mercy of the Lord is that which we are exhorted to look for. His coming will be a merciful deliverance for His own from all the ruin of the Church and also from the surrounding evil. Thus the hope of the mercy of the Lord, especially at His coming, is a real anchor for the believer. Notice that in Acts 27:29 they cast out the four anchors and wished for the day. The day of His coming is the hope and bright prospect of the true Church. The foregoing four anchors will keep us unmoved by every stormy wind during the night of Christ's absence. Added to these, we have the anchor of Hebrews 6:19-20 "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." This anchor is fastened to our Savior Jesus in the sanctuary of heaven.

Returning to Acts 27:1-44, we notice that while the ship was anchored it was preserved, but that the next day when they cast off the anchors into the sea and fell into a place where two seas met the ship was wrecked. This illustrates for us the importance of being anchored and shows how soon shipwreck follows when the anchors are cast aside. If we as individuals give up one or all of these anchors provided for us it will mean disaster for us, spiritually. Christendom is already casting away these anchors of Jude 1:20. The Bible is no longer believed to be the infallible Word of God; the faith is departed from, prayer is given up, the love of God is unknown, and the hope of the Lord's coming is not believed or looked for. Soon shipwreck will come upon it and God will completely disown it.

All in the ship got safely to land on boards, etc., and after three months a third ship is entered which has the sign of "Castor and Pollux," sons of Jupiter and guardians of navigation according to heathen mythology. In this ship the journey is made to Rome where Paul is kept a prisoner. This may symbolize that which is taught else where in the New Testament, how the apostate Church will end up in the heathen idolatry of Babylon the great and of the antichrist and all Pauline truth will be imprisoned by Rome (Revelation 13:1-18; Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24). May we who know the Lord witness faithfully for Him amidst the apostacy and ruin of Christendom, look for souls to sail with us, hold fast to the anchors, and look for the day of His coming again.

02.48. Remnant Testimony

Remnant Testimony

Throughout the Scriptures we find that no matter how great the ruin, failure, and moral darkness of the general testimony or times, God always had some true-hearted believers who were separated from the corrupt and godless masses or lifeless profession of those who claimed to belong to God, and were characterized by genuine devotion to God and His interests. We observe that God never leaves Himself without witnesses who shine as lights for Him in the darkness. Such are spoken of as a "remnant," meaning those who are left as a witness for God when the majority have departed from Him and His Word and have corrupted themselves with the evils about.

We find the term "remnant" a number of times in the Bible. Ezra in his prayer of confession to God said, "grace hath been shewed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape" (Ezra 9:8). In Ezekiel 6:7-8 God said, "And the slain shall fall in the midst of you . . . Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have some that shall escape the sword." And the apostle Paul in speaking of the people of Israel said, "Even so at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Romans 11:5). These are a few examples of the occurrence of the term "remnant." As in the Old Testament there was ever a remnant of true and faithful believers, so we find in the New Testament that amidst the ruin and apostacy of Israel and of the Church, God ever has a remnant of true-hearted and faithful believers with whom He communicates and to whom He manifests Himself in a special way. Thus in the day of the ruin and apostacy of the professing Church, those who would be true to the Lord and His Word are but a little remnant amidst the vast professing mass.

General Characteristics

It is, therefore, helpful and encouraging for all who would be faithful to the Lord in these last days of the Church to study the characteristics of the remnant of loyal believers in all ages and to note how they were sustained and encouraged of God in the evil day. In these pages we can only point out a few features of some of the remnants of old, but would urge the reader to study this subject in detail for himself. (A pamphlet, "The Remnant: Past and Present" by C. H. Mackintosh will prove very helpful).

We may state at the beginning that the fact of there being a remnant proves the failure of the outward witness or professing body, whether Jewish or Christian, to be a true testimony for God. If all were faithful, there would be no ground for the distinguishing of a few from the professing body. The remnant at any time will always be seen to consist of those who feel and confess the common failure and ruin of the general testimony, but count upon God and cleave to His Word while walking in separation from the evil.

It will also be seen that the greater the ruin of the outward testimony, the richer the display of divine grace in the remnant; the deeper the gloom of the day, the brighter the outshining of individual faithfulness to God. Though man has ever failed to maintain that which God has

entrusted to him, God is ever faithful and merciful and true to His promises and ever maintains a testimony for Himself. This is what is revealed by a study of the remnants in Scripture. The above is of immense encouragement to every truehearted child of God who feels and owns the hopeless wreck and ruin of the professing Church. It is indeed cheering to be assured that, however the Church has failed, it is the privilege of the individual believer to enjoy as full and precious fellowship with God, and to walk in as high a path of obedience and blessing as in the brightest days of the Church's history.

Hezekiah's Day In 2 Chronicles 30:1-27 we have the account of a revival in the days of Hezekiah at a time when the outward unity of the nation was broken and things were at a very low state in Israel. Though Hezekiah's call and proclamation to all Israel and Judah to come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem to keep the Passover was scorned by the majority and his messengers mocked, yet some of the people of various tribes humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. There they kept the Passover in the second month and the Feast of Unleavened Bread with great gladness. "So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem" (2 Chronicles 30:26). The grace of God met those of His people who owned their sin and neglect of God and took their true place of humiliation before Him. There was much weakness in obeying God's Word, but the Lord was gracious and blessed them richly and gave a great reviving. They did not set themselves up as those who were "the approved of God" or assume to be something, but simply took a place of humiliation and confession before God and sought to obey His Word. The result was that they experienced great joy and gladness, such as never had been in Jerusalem since the days of Solomon. What an example and encouragement for true believers today.

Daniel and His Companions In the book of Daniel we have the account of Daniel and his companions, in whom we see another example of a godly remnant of faithful believers in a day of ruin and evil. Though Jerusalem and the temple there, where God had placed His name, lay in ruins and Israel had been carried captive to Babylon, this little band of devoted men were true to God's Word amid the pollution and abomination of Babylon's idolatry. They walked in separation from it all and endured the fiery furnace and the lion's den rather than compromise the truth of God.

They purposed in their hearts not to defile themselves. They engaged in earnest prayer before God and received the revelation of His secrets. Daniel felt the great ruin of the testimony and the sins of Israel and confessed them to God. He identified himself with it all, saying, "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity" (Daniel 9:5). The mercies of God were counted upon and His grace implored in confiding faith in His promises with the resultant display of power and wonderful prophetic revelations. Wonderful lessons, indeed, for us in the day of the Church's ruin.

Post-Captivity Days In the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Haggai we have the record of a remnant that availed themselves of the opportunity to leave the captivity in Babylon and return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and the wall around the city. They were but a small and feeble company from among the nation of Israel who had a heart for the worship of Jehovah. Having returned to Jerusalem, they did not pretend to be "Israel," but would contemplate all Israel. This is seen in their building "the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt-offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses" (Ezra 3:2). They also "set the altar upon his bases" and "kept also the feast of

tabernacles, as it is written" (Ezra 3:3-4). Their first concern was the worship of Jehovah and they returned to the divine order and did "as it is written in the law of Moses." They did not set up something new, but returned to that which God had before set up. They set the altar upon its bases-where it had been before. They kept the Passover with "all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the Lord God of Israel" (Ezra 6:19-21). Thus they were a company separated from evil and devoted to God and would receive those who likewise separated themselves from evil. When failure and sin came in among them later there was confession, trembling before God, and putting away of the evil (Ezra 9:10). Precious encouragement and example for us in our day of ruin. In the book of Malachi we behold this same remnant some years later. Though they were in the divine position before God, their state was very sorrowful and bad. Still, we find among them those who were faithful to the Lord and met His approval. They were, so to say, a remnant within a remnant. Of these we read, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name" (Malachi 3:16). How refreshing to read of such a company, amidst the terrible scene of evil, who honored and loved the Lord and found in Him their center and their delight. For them there was a book of remembrance written, something we never hear of in the glorious days of Moses, Joshua, David, or Solomon. We can learn much from this godly remnant of Malachi's day. In the New Testament In the Epistle of Jude, where the appalling evils of apostate Christendom are pointed out, we find a Christian remnant spoken of and addressed. The Epistle is written to this remnant: "To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." Amidst the evil and corruptions around them, they are exhorted to build themselves up on their most holy faith, pray in the Holy Ghost, keep themselves in the love of God, and look for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 1:20-21) exhortations which we considered in our previous studies.

We would here quote the excellent words of C. H. Mackintosh relative to this remnant and as to that which should be found in the present day Christian remnant: "Here, then, we have a lovely view of the true Christian remnant and their occupation among themselves... There is no pretension, no assumption, no setting themselves up to be anything, no attempt to ignore the sad and solemn fact of the utter and hopeless ruin of the professing church. It is a Christian remnant in the midst of Christendom's ruins, true to the Person of Christ, true to His Word; knit together in love true Christian love -not the love of sect, party, clique or coterie, but love in the Spirit, love to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; love expressing itself in true devotedness to Christ and His precious interests; and loving ministry to all who belong to Him and seek to reflect Him in all their ways. It is not resting in mere position, regardless of condition-a terrible snare of the devil-but a healthy union of the two in a life characterized by sound principle and gracious practice; the kingdom of God established in the heart and developing itself in the whole practical career.

"Such then is the position, such the condition, such the practice of the true Christian remnant; and we may rest assured that, where these things are realized and carried out, there will be as rich enjoyment of Christ, as full communion with God and as bright a testimony to the glorious truth of New Testament Christianity as ever was known in the brightest days of the Church's history. In a word, there will be that which will glorify the name of God, gratify the heart of Christ and tell, with living power, on the hearts and consciences of men. May God, in His infinite goodness, give us to

see these bright realities in this dark and evil day.

"As in Israel of old, so in the professing Church, the remnant will be found to consist of those who are true to Christ, hold fast His word in the face of everything, are devoted to His precious interests, and who love His appearing. In a word, it must be a living reality and not mere church membership or nominal fellowship, here or there, with this or that. Moreover, it is not assuming to be, but really being of the remnant-not the name, but the spiritual power; so the apostle says, 'I will know, not the speech ... but the power.' " In closing we would call attention to the remnants that are singled out and cheered in the messages to the seven Churches of Asia in Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22. In Thyatira we find a remnant addressed for the first time in these messages and there also we read for the first time of the Lord's coming. Here, too, the hearing ear is no longer looked for in the Assembly, but in the overcomer (see Revelation 2:24-29). This shows that all hope of corporate recovery of the professing Church is here given up. But the remnant that was clear of Jezebel's teaching and the depths of Satan is encouraged to hold fast what they have till He comes and is promised a place of reigning with Christ. In Sardis the few who have not defiled their garments are promised that they shall walk with Christ in white and that He will confess their names before His Father and His angels (Revelation 3:4-5). In Philadelphia we have a precious picture of a company of humble and feeble Christians who are true to Christ, keep His Word, and do not deny His name (Revelation 3:7-13). In Laodicea, where there is heartless indifference to Christ and deplorable self-satisfaction, the individual is appealed to. Christ is outside the door of the Church, knocking. "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20). In each of these messages to the seven Churches the overcomers are appealed to and given precious promises if they overcome and heed the Spirit's voice. Thus we learn that when all is in ruin, failure, and apostacy the Lord looks for overcomers who will hear His voice and obey Him. Such are the true remnant of the Church in every period of its history. May the Lord enable us to be true overcomers and to render a faithful remnant testimony in these last days of the Church's dark ruin.

Here we close our meditations on the great and glorious subject of "The Church of the Living God." We have considered its nature and order in its universal and local aspect and have viewed its divine characteristics and order as originally instituted of God and its present state of ruin. We have noted its ministry and its gifts from its glorified Head, considered the divine relationships that should exist between local representations of the Church and observed the path marked out for us in the day of ruin. May the reader, like the Bereans of old, receive the word with all readiness of mind and search the Scriptures daily to see whether these things are so (Acts 17:11).

R. K. Campbell

03.01. The Prophetic History of Christendom

The Prophetic History of Christendom As Seen in the Seven Churches of Asia - Revelation 2:1-29;
Revelation 3:1-22

R K Campbell

03.02. Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Introduction The Church as a Candlestick Seven-fold Description "The Mystery of the Seven Stars" The Character of the Messages Divided Into Three and Four The Message to Ephesus The Message to Smyrna The Message to Pergamos The Message To Thyatira The Message To Sardis The Message To Philadelphia The Message To Laodicea

Conclusion

03.03. Introduction

Introduction

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John" (Revelation 1:1). This verse shows us that the whole book of Revelation deals with things which must shortly come to pass; that is, it is of a prophetic character regarding future things. The subject of the messages to the seven churches of Asia, which shall be before us in these studies, is prophetic in character as well as historical. We have not only an historical account of conditions that existed in these seven churches at the time when the apostle John was given this vision and these messages, but a prophetic picture of the history of the professing Church, or Christendom, from the apostolic times down to the end. This will be before us in detail later.

"I John. was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks" (Revelation 1:9-12).

03.04. The Church as a Candlestick

The Church as a Candlestick

Here in Revelation we have the church or assemblies symbolized as candlesticks or as "golden lamps" (N.Tn). "The seven candle-sticks which thou sawest are the seven churches" (Revelation 1:20). This means that the Church is regarded by the Lord as a vessel of testimony bearing light in this dark world. That is what the Church and every believer should be, a light in this world. The Lord said. "Ye are the light of the world. . . Let your light so shine before men" (Matthew 5:14-16). This is a privilege and a responsibility and the Lord addresses the Church in its responsibility to bear light and testimony for Himself. He has something to say to each of the seven assemblies in this respect and to all of us today as well. The Lord in the Midst of the Candlesticks

"And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow: and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength" (Revelation 1:13-16). This is the vision that John saw of the Lord Jesus, the Son of Man, standing in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. Here we have the Lord in a special character and it is important that, before we take up the subject of the addresses to the seven churches, we consider Him in this special character. As we consider this seven-fold description of the Lord which we have just read, we can readily see that it is not the Lord Jesus as the bridegroom loving His Church that is before us. He is not before us in His character as the great High Priest either. He is seen here in the long judicial robes and garments of a judge that is beholding all that is going on in His Assembly.

It is a solemn thought for us as believers to realize that we have to do with the Lord, not only as the Head of the Church, or as our beloved Bridegroom, but as our Judge to whom we must give an account. The vision of the Lord here is something like the thought expressed in James 5:9, "Behold, the judge standeth before the door." He sees all that is going on and sends a message to each of the Assemblies regarding what He beholds among them. The Lord is seen clothed with a garment down to the feet and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. He is the Judge, and the girdle about His breast indicates a restraint of affections. He is not free to let His love go out to His Church, because there are things in it with which He is not pleased.

03.05. Seven-fold Description

Seven-fold Description In this delineation of His person that follows, we have first, His head and hairs described as being "white like wool, as white as snow." This reminds us of Daniel 7:9 where the Ancient of days is described in similar language. He is the One who is from all eternity. We have to do with the eternal One, the Ancient of days. Second, His "eyes were as a flame of fire." Fire is piercing and consuming, a figure of the holiness of God searching all things. Third, "His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." That speaks of judgment, for brass in Scripture is a figure of the righteousness of God in connection with man in judgment.

Fourth, His voice was "as the sound of many waters." This speaks of majesty and might with which the sound of many waters impresses one. Fifth, "He had in his right hand seven stars." This speaks of power, the right hand of power. He has all things in His right hand. "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches" (v.20), the messengers or representatives of the churches, as we shall consider more fully later. He is the One who said before ascending to heaven, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). He is the One who should be looked to and depended upon, but the Church soon forgot its Lord with all power and turned to man for help.

Sixth, "Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." This is the Word of God that judges all things. So we find that in these messages to the seven churches, He speaks, His Word judges and His eye discerns everything, even through that which outwardly seems very good, as we shall see with Ephesus, where He could commend all the wonderful things, but that holy eye could see underneath it all the root of deterioration and departure, the leaving of the first and chief love, and judge it. Oh, that we would realize more that we have to do with the Word of God, this sharp two-edged sword and that we would use it more in self-judgment.

Seventh, "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." Here we have the thought of supreme authority, for in Genesis 1:16 the sun was appointed to rule the day and the moon, the night. Thus the sun in all its power and brightness speaks of supreme majesty and authority. Such is our Lord and the One to whom His Church should ever look and heed.

"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead" (Genesis 1:17). Such was the effect upon John of viewing the Lord in this judicial character of majesty, greatness and authority. We also need to see the Lord more in this holy, judicial character in the midst of His Assembly and fall at His feet in submission and reverence. We like to think of the comforting promise of Matthew 18:20, that the Lord whom we love is in our midst to guide and minister to us when gathered to His Name. But let us not forget the holy character of the One who is in our midst, as presented here in Revelation 1:13-16. He is the Holy and the True One and of purer eyes than to behold iniquity (Habakkuk 1:13; Revelation 3:7). Thus there is a responsibility connected with having the Lord in our midst.

Then if we too fall down at His feet, as John did, we will also hear the wonderful words, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore" (Revelation 1:17-18). Then we shall realize His resurrection power among us.

03.06. The Mystery of the Seven Stars

"The Mystery of the Seven Stars"

"The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks." The seven stars and sticks of the vision were symbols of the seven churches. But the word "mystery" would also suggest that something more than just messages to these seven literal Assemblies in Asia is involved. We have something more than just the present condition of these seven Assemblies of that day set before us in chapters two and three. We shall see that they give us a prophetic picture of seven distinct periods in the history of the whole professing Church. Thus there is a mysterious character to this whole scene of the seven stars and the seven golden candlesticks and the messages that follow to each Church.

Surely there were more Assemblies in Asia than these seven that are before us in Revelation one through three. Why then were just these seven picked out by the Lord and messages sent to them? We shall see that Revelation is a book of sevens, the seven churches, the seven-sealed book, seven trumpets and seven vials of wrath. Seven is a complete number, and the different conditions found in these seven particular Assemblies in Asia present a complete prophetic view of seven distinct stages of the professing Church from the time of the apostle John to its end.

We have called our subject "The Prophetic History of Christendom." We apply the term "Christendom" to all that claims to be Christian and professedly embraces Christianity. We know that much of it is false and not truly Christian or true to Christ. It is the history of this professing mass of true and false believers, which we call "Christendom," that is before us in the messages to the seven Churches of Asia in their prophetic aspect. The true Church of Christ is composed only of genuine believers who have been baptized by the Spirit into His body (See 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:13; Ephesians 1:22-23).

Angels of the Churches

Let us inquire further into the meaning of the term "the angels of the seven churches." The Greek word here translated "angel" also means "a messenger" and is thus translated in other passages. So we could read "the messengers of the seven churches." The messenger would be the responsible element in the Church or Assembly, its representative before God. As another has written, the angel of the church would represent "those to whom, from nearness to Christ and communion with Him and responsibility for it, Christ looks to for the state of His Assembly." It is the symbolical representative of the assembly seen in those responsible in it, which in one sense all really are. In Acts 20:1-38 we read of the apostle Paul calling for the elders of the Church of Ephesus and giving them a special charge, saying among other things: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God." They were especially responsible to care for the flock among whom the Lord had set them as overseers. So it is in the messages to the seven Churches. They are addressed to the angel of the Church, to those bearing responsibility in the Assembly and to whom the Lord

looked for the state of the Assembly. They, undoubtedly, would convey to the whole company what the Lord had to say and would labour for the correction of the wrongs.

All this is full of meaning for us today as well. There are those whom the Holy Spirit has made overseers among the flock of God and whom He holds responsible for the state of His Assemblies and looks to for the spiritual condition of His people. May we answer to this privilege and responsibility.

"The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches." Stars are heavenly luminaries and would convey the thought of those who are set in the Church to give heavenly light. These stars are in His right hand. The Lord has authority over all the representatives of heavenly light; He holds in His hand all His servants and controls them.

Outline of the Seven Periods As we have previously stated, the conditions found in the seven Churches of Asia, as set forth in Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22, present a prophetic view of the condition and state of the whole professing Church at seven different periods of its history. We shall here briefly speak of these seven periods which will be before us later in detail as we take up each Church. In the Assembly at Ephesus we have a picture of what was true of the whole Church at the time when the apostle John was given this vision and up until about 167 AD. The Church at Smyrna presents to us what was true of the whole Church during the time of the Roman persecutions which lasted till about 313 AD. In the Assembly at Pergamos we have a different condition. This describes for us the state of the professing Church after the cessation of the Roman persecutions and takes us to about 600 AD. During this time idolatry came in and the Church and the State became united and the Church began to walk with the world. The next Church is Thyatira which sets before us the fourth period in the history of professing Christendom. The period began around 600 AD and continued to the eve of the Reformation. During this time heathenism came into the Church and the papal system of Rome fully developed. The fifth period is given us in the state of the Assembly at Sardis which sets forth the condition of Protestantism after the Reformation of the early sixteenth century. In the Church of Philadelphia we have a prophetic picture of the revival period in the Church's history. This took place in the latter part of the eighteenth century and the first part of the nineteenth century when God worked in a wonderful way, bringing revival out of the deadness of Protestantism and a remnant returned to Christ and His Word. This is the sixth period. The Church of the Laodiceans presents to us the seventh and last stage of the professing Church, or Christendom. This began in the nineteenth century and continues on in our present day. It is the state of luke-warmness, indifference, materialism and apos tasy which characterizes the professing Church today.

Threefold View

There are three ways in which we can consider these messages to the seven Churches of Asia. (1) We may look at them as describing what was actually true in these various Assemblies at the time they were written. This is the historical view. (2) We can consider them from the prophetic viewpoint as outlined above. (3) We may view them as applying in a practical way to any Assembly or individual at any period whose state might correspond with that depicted therein. This would be the practical view with lessons for ourselves from each Church. Thus we can see we have a very fruitful study before us in this most instructive and interesting portion of God's Word.

03.07. The Character of the Messages

The Character of the Messages In considering these messages to the Seven Churches we will find a general pattern of five characteristics running through nearly all of them.

First, the Approach of the Lord - In each message the first thing we read is the way the Lord presents Himself to the particular Church. Each presentation is different and we will do well to carefully note how He approaches or presents Himself to each Assembly, for therein is the key to the situation and also the remedy for what was wrong in the eyes of the Lord. For instance, to Ephesus the Lord presents Himself as the One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, and walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. In the beginning of the Church and during this first period of Ephesus, the Lord was known and owned as the Head of the Church, as the One who was Lord of all and had everything in His right hand. The Church looked to Him and depended on Him for everything, so the Lord could present Himself to Ephesus in this way.

Now notice in contrast the way the Lord presents Himself to Sardis in Revelation 3:1. There He says He has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars and knows her works, but He does not say that He has the seven stars in His right hand. The reason for this omission is that Sardis did not own Him as the Head of the Church, and this is especially true of Protestantism which Sardis represents in the prophetic view. The Church after the Reformation failed to own and recognize the Lord as its sole head and did not depend upon Him for guidance, power and protection, but looked to heads of government, etc. So the Lord presents Himself to Sardis as the One who has the seven Spirits, all power and all wisdom and guidance.

Second, the Commendation - In the communication to each Church the Lord commends what He could. If He has to criticize, censure or blame, He first of all commends all that was good, a very practical point to notice in the ways of our Lord. It would be well for us to remember this, for oftentimes we begin with the censure or criticism and forget what is commendable in one and fail to mention it. Our Lord does not do this. So often we read in these messages, "I know thy works." He knows all things and commends all that is good before speaking of that which displeases Him.

Third, the Censure or Blame for that which the Lord does not approve of. To all but two of these seven Assemblies the Lord speaks of things that He had against them or that He did not approve of. This characteristic is an important part of the messages and is full of instruction and learning for the Church at all times. The two churches not censured are Smyrna, the suffering church, and Philadelphia, the feeble remnant; both are much encouraged by the Lord.

Fourth, the Call or Promise to the Overcomer - In each message the overcomer is addressed, and special, encouraging promises are given to cheer him along amidst the difficulties and evil he is called upon to overcome. This special characteristic of these messages shows us that God looks for overcomers in every age of the Church's history and counts upon some to overcome by His power the evil conditions displeasing to Himself. To such He holds out wonderful promises of future award and blessing. These promises are a wonderful study in themselves and a source of

much encouragement to saints at all times.

Fifth, the Call to the Hearing Ear - This is found in all seven communications - "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The Lord looks for the exercised heart and the hearing ear to hear and consider what He has to say as to what pleases and displeases Him. It is the call to the individual to be exercised about what the Spirit saith unto all the seven churches, not just to one church. When the Lord was on earth He said, "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 7:16).

03.08. Divided Into Three and Four

Divided Into Three and Four

We should notice that in the messages to the first three churches the call to the hearing ear precedes the promise to the overcomer which is the last word. Thus we have the seven messages divided into two groups of three and four, a division that is often found in the Word of God. The parables of Matthew 13:1-58 and the seven trumpets and seven vial judgments of Revelation are examples of such division. The conditions found in the first three churches do not continue on to the end of the Church's history, whereas the conditions manifest in the last four churches do. The Ephesus period passed into the Smyrna condition of persecution when the whole Church suffered cruel oppression and sometimes death for the Lord. When the period of persecution stopped, the Smyrna condition ended and the Pergamos period of the Church and the State united began. The Church joined hands with the pagan world, and out of this condition the Thyatira state and system of Romanism emerged.

Thus the conditions described in Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamos have passed away, while that set forth in Thyatira has continued to this day and will to the end. So also has the condition of Sardis (Protestantism) continued on to this moment. And we believe that at least something of the moral conditions of Philadelphia have continued in an individual way and will till the Lord comes for His true Church. Then we have the last stage or condition of Laodicea, which goes on to the very end. In the first three churches the call to the hearing ear is addressed to the whole Church, but in Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea the overcomer is addressed first, which means there is a remnant of true believers that overcomes. Then follows the exhortation to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. This marks out the position of the remnant in these last four churches as being separate from the general body of the church. The call to hear is especially addressed to the overcomers, for only they will hear the voice of the Lord by His Spirit.

Beginning with Thyatira there is no hope of the recovery of the whole church. The condition of apostasy is irreparable, so a remnant is recognized and the Lord's coming introduced as the only hope (Revelation 2:21; Revelation 2:24-25).

Having had before us these general observations on the messages to the seven Churches, we are now ready for a detailed study of each communication.

03.09. The Message to Ephesus

The Message to Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7) Meaning of the Name

Ephesus means "full purpose" and in the Epistle to the Ephesians, which the apostle Paul wrote to them, we have the full purposes of God as to His Church fully brought out and developed. The apostle had spent much time there and God wrought a great work in that city. The Word of God grew mightily and prevailed (Acts 19:1-41). The Assembly at Ephesus was in a wonderful spiritual condition in the days of Paul, and thus he was free to unfold to them the highest spiritual truths as to the Church and the counsels of God. We have then the full purposes of God in Ephesus . Ephesians 1:9-11; Ephesians 3:10-11 contain the very word "purpose" and tell us something of God's purposes in Christ. But now at the time of the revelation here given to the apostle John, some thirty-two years after the Epistle to the Ephesians had been written, the root of spiritual decline and departure had already set in among this wonderful Assembly at Ephesus . Amidst so much that was highly commendable, the divine eyes "as a flame of fire" discerned that they had left their first love. Of this we shall speak later in its proper place. The Approach of the Lord

"These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" (Revelation 2:1). He presents Himself to Ephesus as the One who has the seven stars, the angels or representatives, the responsible element in the Assemblies, in His right hand, and, as the One who walks in the midst of the Churches and beholds what manner of light and testimony their candlestick is giving forth. The Lord presents Himself here in the general character in which He presented Himself to the whole Church in chapter 1. He walks amidst the candlesticks to survey the condition of the Churches, to test their state by His Word and His infallible standard of holiness, and to judge their character as His responsible light-bearers in a dark and evil world. The stars and candlesticks are explained to us in their symbolical meaning in Revelation 1:20, which we have previously considered. Stars give light and rule the course of time (Genesis 1:14-18) and would represent those whom the Lord has set in the Church for giving the light of His Word, for teaching, and for government. The gift and authority for these purposes belong to Christ - the stars are in His right hand. This was known and recognized in the apostolic period when the Lord was owned as the Head of His Church. The making of rules for the government of the Church and the ordination of teachers and pastors, which has since come in, is really a usurpation, however unintentionally, of Christ's authority. The Commendation

"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. . But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate."

Such are the wonderful words of approval and commendation the Lord could say to the Church at Ephesus and of the whole Church of God in this first epoch of its prophetic history. There were works pleasing to Himself, labours, patience, abhorrence of evil, testing of profession in godly care, long-suffering, devotion to His Name, and perseverance in difficult labour. Wonderful

features indeed were found in the Assembly at Ephesus, and in all this there is a pattern and example for the Church at all times. Oh, that such exquisite characteristics were found in Assemblies of believers today!

They not only laboured, but continued in labour and fainted not amidst difficulties and discouragements. They had endurance in labour for His name's sake. How many times we have laboured, but have grown weary in it, fainted and given up. It is a great thing to persevere in work for Christ. "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9).

"Thou canst not bear them that are evil." Ephesus realized something of the holy character of the Lord to whom they were gathered and who was in their midst, and thus they were not careless or indifferent to evildoers. This feature should be found in us today also when the tendency is to wink at evil, let down the bars, make excuses for many things and be indifferent about that which the Lord hates. There was an abhorrence of evildoers at Ephesus, and the Lord commends them for it.

"Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." This was another commendable feature found in the Assembly at Ephesus. They tested profession and didn't take everyone at his own say-so. Some even claimed to be apostles, but they were tried and manifested as liars. They examined all who came before them as Christians. The apostle John had written, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1John 4:1). This trait of godly care is missing in most of evangelical Christendom today, for in most places the Lord's supper is left open for any to partake of, who so desire, to any who say they are saved. On their own profession they are allowed this holy privilege, but that is not according to the Word of God, or the way Ephesus and the early Church did. They tried those who professed to be Christians and found out, as much as possible, those that were true and those that were false. In the days of Nehemiah, porters were placed at the gates of Jerusalem to watch them so that the enemy would not gain entrance (Nehemiah 7:1-3). Likewise porters are needed in the Assembly of God, who, with godly care and love, will watch and examine those who seek to be admitted to the privileges of God's house. Our concern should be that none should be brought into the Assembly who have no title or right to be there, those who are not the Lord's or whose walk and associations are not right, and that none should be kept out whom the Lord would have inside. The Lord said, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father" (Matthew 7:20-21). The Scripture, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," found in the same chapter, verse 1, does not apply in this connection, but to one's inward motives. The outward life and actions are the fruits by which we are to judge Christian profession.

"Thou . hast borne, and hast patience." Patience is a wonderful virtue and a characteristic of God. The Assembly at Ephesus was characterized by it, and so should it be with believers today. We often get impatient when we are tried. They had to contend with evildoers at Ephesus, but they endured and had patience. Patience in evil is characteristic of the Lord and His dealings with man. He looks for this feature in His saints too. Ignorance of the truth of God by many also calls for patient instruction on our part. "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men,

apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves" (2 Timothy 2:24-25).

"Thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate." Here the Lord speaks of the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, and in the message to Pergamos he speaks of those among this Assembly that held the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. What the deeds or doctrine were we are not told. Many conjectures have been made as to this, but nothing is known with real certainty from church history as to any such sect, its deeds or doctrine. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, who died around 200 AD, is the earliest Christian writer to mention the Nicolaitanes. He says: "It very clearly appears from the Apocalypse that the Nicolaitanes held fornication, and the eating of idol sacrifices, to be things indifferent, and therefore permitted to Christians."

All early writers agree on the main features of Nicolaitanism as being of an impure and licentious character, combining the profession of Christianity with the impurities of Paganism, "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness" as Jude warned (Revelation 2:4). In the 18th and 19th century other ideas as to this sect were brought forth. Some scholars conjectured that the Nicolaitanes were of similar character with the followers of the way of Balaam (2 Peter 2:15), and that "Nicolaitanes" is simply the Greek translation of the Hebrew "Balaam," both signifying "conquerors or masters of the people." In Revelation 2:14-15, the doctrine of Balaam and that of the Nicolaitanes are spoken of together, yet distinguished.

Others confining themselves to the meaning of the name have pointed out that "Nicolaitanes" comes from "nikao," meaning "to conquer", and from " laos," "the people," or "laity." Thus the term would refer to the development of a class, which we know as "the clergy", rising up in the Church above the laity and ruling over them.

There is ample evidence in church history that the system of the clergy, as separate from the laity, sprang up early in the Church. The common priesthood of all believers, as taught in Scripture (1 Peter 2:5, 1 Peter 2:9), was soon set aside, also the presence of the Holy Spirit and His free ministry in the Church, and the unscriptural distinction between clergy and laity fast became a regular thing. Thus the belief so prominent through the centuries that only a certain class, humanly ordained, have the exclusive right to preach and teach and administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper in the Church.

Ignatius, a disciple and friend of the apostle John, who survived him only by about seven years and was Bishop of Antioch, metropolis of Syria, wrote seven epistles on his journey to martyrdom, around AD 107. Therein he stressed submission to the bishop, and "to look upon the bishop even as we do upon the Lord Himself." Another sentence from his letters shows how a clerical system, not found in Scripture, had already formed in the Church at this early date: "I cried whilst I was among you; I spake with a loud voice, 'attend to the bishop, and to the presbytery, and to the deacons.'" (See Miller's Church History, Vol.1, pages 150-157). (It may be of interest to know that the Episcopal form of church government is based on Ignatius' writings.)

Believing the subject of Nicolaitanism to be of vital importance, the writer has searched into this matter and taken some space to give the two main views of Bible scholars thereon. It may well be that both views are embraced by the term Nicolaitanes in a literal and symbolical sense. The writer is convinced that the system of the clergy, which certainly began in this Ephesus period, is referred to by this symbolical term, though not necessarily limiting it to this.

What is most important to notice is that the Lord commended Ephesus for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitanes which He also hated. He speaks of this after the necessary censure and warning of Revelation 2:4-5, which is the more touching as an added appreciation of His wounded heart. We are to hate what the Lord hates, not the persons, but the deeds. The Psalmist could say he hated "every false way," "vain thoughts," and "lying" (Psalms 119:104; Psalms 119:113; Psalms 119:163). Everything not according to Holy Scripture is a false way, vain, a lie and to be hated, even though it may boast of antiquity as from the church fathers. The Censure

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Revelation 2:4). Here we have the reproof and censure of the Lord against the Assembly at Ephesus . This is the third characteristic of these messages to the churches. In spite of all that was so commendable in Ephesus, which we have previously noted, the Lord has to say, "but I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love." So the more correct rendering of the New Translation reads. The word "somewhat" in our King James Version is in italics, showing that it was supplied by the translators and is not in the original manuscripts. It weakens the force of the Lord's reproof and should be left out.

"Thou hast left thy first love." This is what the Lord had against Ephesus . What does this say to us? It tells us that, though the Lord appreciates all the wonderful features of works, labours, patience, abhorrence of evil, etc., which were found in the Assembly at Ephesus, He looks for that first love in our hearts. He wants the best love which springs from a heart fully enamoured and taken up with Himself as its object. The word "first" here is the same word in the original as that which is translated "best" in Luke 15:22, "the best robe." So it is our best or chief love which the Lord desires. It is not first love as to point of time, as when first converted, though the love of the newborn convert is very wonderful and fresh, but first in quality. He wants our best and chief love and will not be satisfied with anything else.

So, if we have ever loved the Lord better than we do today, this word of censure and blame; "thou hast left thy first love," is directed to us also. The Lord says to us, "I do not have the same place in your heart which I once had; that place I desire again." He is a jealous God (Exodus 20:5) and wants our whole heart, our chief love in all its freshness. As another has well said, "The first love is that absorption of heart with Christ which is ever produced by an overwhelming sense of His grace and love in redemption" (E. Dennett). It is the result of coming under the powerful and personal influence of His love, that character of love which His love gives impulse to. As His love fills and floods our souls, a responding love will be produced in our hearts, the best love He is looking for. Thus the exhortation in Jude twenty-one is, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." In his Epistle to the Assembly at Thessalonica, written to those newly converted, the apostle speaks of their "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:3). There was faith, love and hope. In Ephesus there were works, but they are not called the "work of faith." There was labour, but it is not called "labour of love"; there was patience, but it is not spoken of as the "patience of hope." Christ was ever before the Thessalonians and thus faith, love and hope were all connected with Himself. Some of this was still left at Ephesus, but it was ebbing. The first love for Christ, as the spring from which all must flow, was missing. His discerning eyes detected it and this was charged against them.

Work for the Lord is necessary; there is much to be done for Him and the Lord is looking for servants, but our service must spring from love to Himself. Self and rivalry with others may enter into our service. Then love for the Lord is not the spring of our labours and they do not have the same value to the Lord as when done out of love to Him.

It should be noted that the Lord does not say they had lost their first love, but that they had "left" it. Something lost may never be found again, but anything left somewhere can be obtained again, generally speaking. So we can go back to the place in our soul's experience where we may have left our best love and return to it again by self-judgment. This is encouraging, is it not? The Call to Remembrance and Repentance

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works" (Revelation 2:5). The Lord calls Ephesus to remember the place where they once were in the enjoyment of first love and to repent about their fall from it and to return to those first works of that best and chief love. The Lord would have us realize that leaving our first love is the root of all departure and decline. From that condition of heart flow all backsliding, sins and apostasy. The downward movement and apostasy of Christendom, as set forth in the prophetic history of these seven Churches of Asia in Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22, begins with leaving the first love in Ephesus and goes on to the awful evils found in the following churches. This is a solemn and searching word for our hearts. If we leave our chief love and do not repent or return, other things will come in and the departure from the Lord will increase. When first love is departed from, many wrong things come in among the saints of God, all because the Lord does not have the chief place in our hearts. But when we return that first and chief place to Him, everything else will fall into its proper place: service, worship, separation from the world, all will follow, but only as we return to the Lord in repentance and first love. This word of censure and call to remembrance and repentance, spoken to Ephesus, is very applicable and needful to us today as well. And it is the word of the Lord to His people today as well as to the Assembly at Ephesus in the first century. First love has been left; we have fallen and need to repent and return to the Lord. Surely the Spirit of God would lead us in these last days to realize that what we need individually and collectively is to give the Lord the first and chief place in our hearts and thus return to the first love. May there be genuine repentance, a change of mind, thoughts and of heart about ourselves, and a doing of the first works that flow from the best love for Christ. The Warning "Or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Revelation 2:5). What a solemn warning to an Assembly where there was so much good. Just one vital thing was wrong, but the Lord says, as it were, "If you don't repent, I will remove your candlestick," meaning that the Church would be given up as a light, or vessel of testimony in the world. If Ephesus did not recover her first love, she would be refused as the Lord's witness and testimony. Her light would be removed because she could no longer be regarded as bearing a true testimony for the Lord. When we come to Laodicea, the seventh church, we find that the Lord says to her, "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spue thee out of My mouth" (Revelation 3:16, N.Tn). This is the final condition of the professing Church, and the Lord is about to give it all up and spue it out as something nauseating and undesirable. Then the candlestick of the Church will be fully removed because she is a faithless and untrue witness that the Lord cannot own as His. In the very beginning of decline in Ephesus, in the first period of the whole Church, the Lord warns the Assembly that He would remove its candlestick unless it repented. We will later see that there

was a measure of recovery in the next period of Smyrna and the candlestick was preserved.

Speaking of individual Assemblies, it is a sad day for any Assembly when it comes to that place where it no longer is a testimony or light in the world and the candlestick is removed by the Lord. One sees Assemblies where the light has been so faint and flickering for years, faithful believers finish their course and pass on, new converts are not added and the company decreases and finally there is no Assembly left - the candlestick is completely removed. The root cause is because first love was left long before. May we heed the warning lesson! The Call to the Hearing Ear

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 2:7). This is the fourth feature of these messages. The individual who has an ear to hear is appealed to to listen and to heed what the Spirit says unto the churches. It is a voice to the individual, and the one who has an exercised heart to hear is to hear what the Spirit has to say. In Matthew 13:1-58 the Lord concluded the parable of the sower with the words, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 13:9). He also spoke of some who "seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand" (Matthew 13:13). The Lord looks for those who have opened ears and hearts to hear and consider what the Spirit has to say to the churches. Such will, in communion with the mind of Christ, judge their state by the light of the written Word. This appeal would indicate that every believer is here made responsible to understand the state of things around him in the professing Church. The whole Assembly is addressed by this call to hear, but only the exercised individual with an opened ear will respond to it.

Promise to the Overcomer

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7). This is the fifth characteristic of these messages. The overcomer is always addressed, and here the cheering promise of eating of the tree of life is given to the overcomer in Ephesus. Adam lost the right to eat of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden when he sinned and was driven out of it. The overcomer here is promised the tree of life in the paradise of God which will never be lost. It is Christ Himself that the overcomer will feed upon and enjoy forever. In this way the Lord seeks to encourage believers to overcome. This blessed promise would cheer their hearts and sustain them in their conflict as they sought to overcome that which the Lord pointed out as displeasing to Himself. It is only the overcomer that has this promise of the tree of life for present comfort and encouragement in the sphere of responsibility and conflict.

Overcoming here is overcoming the evil specified in the Assembly. What the Lord deplored in Ephesus was the loss of their first love. Whoever, by grace and the Spirit's power working in the opened ear and heart, regained the condition of first love, would be an overcomer in the sense of this Scripture and be entitled to the special promise here given. May we all desire and endeavour to be overcomers and return to the conditions of the first and best love to our worthy Lord and Saviour.

03.10. The Message to Smyrna

The Message to Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11)

"And unto the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer" (Revelation 1:8-10). The word "Smyrna" means "myrrh", which is an aromatic gum that exudes from a shrub which has to be crushed in order to emit the full, sweet fragrance. So the Church of the Ephesus period had to be crushed to be brought back to the first love. In Smyrna we come to the second period in the prophetic history of Christendom. Here we find the Church crushed in the fiery trials of persecution and martyrdom and fragrant incense rising up to God therefrom. Myrrh was used in burials, and in the death of these martyrs in Smyrna sweet incense of myrrh went up to God. Smyrna is the suffering church. When the Lord first spoke of His Church in Matthew 16:18, He said, "Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell (Hades) shall not prevail against it." Satan hated Christ, the rock, and he has ever hated the true representation of Christ in the world, so the gates of Hades were unleashed and opened against His Church in the awful persecutions of the Romans against the Christians. This period was from about 167 AD to around 313 AD, when the persecution stopped. There was a double assault upon the Church during this time. From without it was oppressed and persecuted by pagan Rome; from within it was attacked by the blasphemy of those who said they were Jews, but were of the synagogue of Satan. This we shall consider in detail later.

God allowed Satan's persecution of His Church and used it to arrest the decline which had started in the Ephesus period. His love for His people allowed Satan to stir them up by persecution so that He might accomplish the purification and restoration of His saints and that the light of the Church might shine brighter. The afflictions and fiery trials they passed through brought out wonderful faithfulness to the Lord. Thus the testimony of the Church shone bright and the candlestick, that was in danger of being removed in Ephesus, was preserved. Satan's object was to destroy the testimony of the Lord, but God wrought in blessing and used His efforts to awaken and brighten His Church. So God ever overrules Satan's efforts and brings about greater blessings.

We will find a similarity in the seven parables of the kingdom of heaven, which the Lord spoke of in Matthew thirteen, and in these messages to the seven Churches of Asia. In the first parable we have the activity of the sower sowing the good seed. This corresponds to the Ephesus period when there was much labour for the Lord. In the second parable we see the enemy active sowing tares or darnel, a poisonous kind of rye. This corresponds to the Smyrna period of the Church when the enemy, Satan, was especially active in persecution and in corrupting the pure Gospel of God's grace. As we continue our studies of the seven Churches we will make further comparisons with the parables of Matthew thirteen. The Approach of the Lord To Smyrna the Lord presents Himself as "the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive," and as the One who knew their works, tribulation, poverty and the blasphemy of those of the synagogue of Satan. As in each

Church, the character in which the Lord presents Himself is always suitable to the conditions, circumstances and state in which the particular Assembly is found, so this approach of the Lord to Smyrna is so in keeping with the need of this Assembly. What a comfort to those facing martyrdom for the cause of Christ, persecuted unto death under ten consecutive Roman rulers, to have their hearts thus directed to the One who was the first and the last and the One who had gone down into death and was alive for evermore. The Lord in presenting Himself thus to Smyrna would draw their hearts away from their afflictions and sufferings and occupy them with Himself, the all-sufficient One. We need not fear death, the wrath of man, or the power of Satan when our eye is upon the One who has met all the power of the enemy, even the last enemy, death itself, and we see Him who is alive for evermore, the eternal One.

Undoubtedly these words of the Lord were a real cheer and comfort to His people going through this time of awful persecution. And they are for the comfort and encouragement of saints of God at all times. For even in our day, many of God's people have been called upon in various countries to lay down their lives for Christ. Our blessed Lord took part of flesh and blood that "through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-16). He has met the whole power of the enemy and overthrown him and would have His people trusting in Himself who can say, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell (hades) and of death" (Revelation 1:17-18).

Thus the Lord encourages His saints not to fear Satan, who once had the power of death, but to look to Himself who died to deliver them from its fear and bondage. We would also think of His words in Luke 12:4-5 : "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But . Fear Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell." Satan was seeking to terrify the believers in the time of Smyrna and sought to use the fear of death to turn aside the Assembly from faithfulness to Christ. To meet this effort of Satan, the Lord called the attention of His people to Himself as the One who had risen out of death and was alive for evermore. The Lord's Commendation and Encouragement

"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich)" (Revelation 2:9). Thus the Lord in wonderful grace encourages and commends this tried Church. Their works were wrought in the fiery furnace of affliction and trial and pleased Him. Their tribulation and poverty was great, but the Lord comfortingly says, as it were, "I know your works of faith and your sufferings and poverty." He beheld it all as He had beheld His disciples of old toiling in rowing amid contrary winds, and came to them, saying, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid" (Matthew 14:23-27). Thus these tried saints were sustained by the Lord's love and His knowing their tribulation and poverty. The poverty of God's saints was indeed great in this Smyrna period. They were regarded as enemies of their neighbours and of the State, and their enemies surrounded them like a pack of hungry wolves ready to devour them. They had to flee to the underground catacombs where they lived in darkness. At night some of the strong and brave ones would venture out for food. Some of these and many others of the Christians were captured and thrown to the hungry lions before thousands of spectators. Others were wrapped in cloths soaked in oil, hung up on poles, and lit as torches to light the arena for the Roman games. What poverty in earthly things! But the Lord said they were rich.

Hebrews 11:35-39 describes the sufferings of men and women of faith of old, who did not accept deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. They were stoned, slain with the sword, wandered about, were destitute, afflicted and tormented. They wandered in deserts, in mountains, dens and caves of the earth. These things were also true of the Christians during this period of the Church we are considering. They did not accept deliverance, which was offered them if they would renounce Christ, but their faith triumphed in death and they await the full victory in resurrection. "Of whom the world was not worthy" (Hebrews 11:38); such is God's estimate of all such faithful martyrs.

Though the material poverty of Smyrna was great, the Lord in commendation says, "but thou art rich." In His estimation they were rich in good works, rich in faith, rich in God. James 2:5 says, "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith?" And in 1 Timothy 6:18 there is the exhortation to be "rich in good works."

Smyrna stands in contrast with Laodicea, the Church of the present period. To her the Lord says, "thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). The professing Church of today can boast of great earthly riches, but what spiritual poverty the Lord sees. Perhaps it is true of us as believers also; we may proudly point to much material goods, but how much spiritual riches are we in possession of? The Church always prospers more spiritually in times of persecution and distress than it does in times of prosperity. When every thing goes well, God's people are often lulled to sleep, they become careless and indifferent and drift away from the Lord. When wealth, fame and positions of honour are obtained in the world, the Christian is in danger and spirituality tends to decrease. When Christians are poor and little thought of in the world there is not such danger spiritually. The trials and persecutions cast one more upon the Lord and reveal the true character of the world.

"Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). Thus the Lord further encouraged the Church of Smyrna to be faithful to Him unto death and not to fear the things the devil would cause them to suffer. Christ was allowing Satan to persecute them for a limited time, figuratively, ten days. He was allowing it for their spiritual and eternal good. How good to know that our God is over everything, over all the devices, power and purposes of the enemy, and that only what He allows falls upon us, and only as long as He allows it. The prophetic, stipulated ten days of tribulation were fulfilled in the ten different edicts of persecution against the Christians under ten Roman Emperors, beginning with Nero and ending with Diocletian. The last persecution of ten years duration was the most violent of all as the enemy sought to uproot and wipe out Christianity. But under the Emperor Constantine the persecution ceased entirely around 313 AD.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." The Lord holds out to the martyr that which is beyond this life and death, the crown of life. This is one of five crowns spoken of in Scripture as encouragements for the faithful. The crown of life is for those willing to lay down their lives for the Lord. Another has beautifully written the following as to this crown:

"The crown of life - life in its full fruition, crowned, as it were, with His own special approbation; life, eternal life, disencumbered from all entanglements, feasting to the full on its own proper objects,

and displayed in all its perfections in its own proper sphere in the Lord's own presence in that special place in glory, which the Lord in His grace may award to those who are faithful unto death. This is the crown of life" (Edward Dennett). As a practical consideration for ourselves on this subject, we might well ask, How much does the Lord mean to us? Does our faith in Christ mean more to us than life itself? The apostle Paul said, "neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy" (Acts 20:24). Life is very dear to the natural man, but the Lord should mean more to us than life itself. May we seek grace to be faithful unto the Lord, even unto death, as the saints in Smyrna were in days of old. The reader will notice that the Lord does not have any censure or blame for the Assembly at Smyrna . In their sufferings and tribulation He only encourages and commends them. In our next study we will consider those whom the Lord speaks of as "the synagogue of Satan," and the call to the hearing ear and the promise to the overcomer.

The Double Assault

There was a double assault of the enemy against Smyrna . Besides the persecutions of the heathen enemy from without, which we considered in our previous study, there was an effort and attack of Satan from within. So the Lord says, "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan" (Revelation 2:9). These who claimed to be Jews (the term is used symbolically) were impiously railing against the true Church and causing them to suffer thus.

There are two diverse ways in which Satan works. The apostle Peter tells us that "your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). A lion is bold and powerful, pouncing on his prey with all his force and fury. That would represent Satan as a persecutor of God's people. In this character he was behind the persecutions of the pagan emperors and sought to crush and devour the Church of Christ . The apostle Paul informs us of another way in which Satan carries out his work. In speaking of false apostles, deceitful workers, who transform themselves into the apostles of Christ, he writes, "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:13-14). Satan often works in this character, through his workers; as an angel of light, pretending to have the light of God, quoting the Scriptures, but corrupting the Word of God and deceitfully handling it (2 Corinthians 2:17; 2 Corinthians 4:2), with the purpose of deceiving and perverting the truth of God. The Assault From Within The attack of the enemy from within in this Smyrna period was in the character of an angel of light and deceitful workers. There was the activity of those who assumed a religious form, those who pretended to have the legitimate, hereditary claims of being God's people, Jews.

They railed against the Christians and slandered the Assembly. In this way the true believers in Smyrna suffered from the blasphemy, hatred and ridicule of these religious people who corrupted the pure Gospel of the grace of God. This was a trial by false claimants within the professing Church whom the Lord strongly labels as "the synagogue of Satan."

Since these false claimants called themselves Jews, it will be helpful to us if we refer to Romans 2:28-29 which gives us the marks of a true spiritual Jew. "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." These spiritual characteristics were not found among these pretenders, so the Lord says they were not Jews at all. In comforting assurance to these afflicted believers,

suffering from this double assault of Satan, the Lord says, "I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not," I know your sorrows and trials. What a comfort for the Lord's people at all times to hear His, "I know"! He knows, He feels and sympathizes with His suffering and tried people and will deliver in His own time. The Synagogue of Satan The Lord says that those who were blaspheming against the true Church in this Smyrna period were the "synagogue of Satan." This is strong language and we need to inquire more fully as to the character of this group and the significance of this term. In these messages to the seven Churches of Asia we can observe the development of the evil which has come into the professing Church. When we behold what characterizes Christendom today, we see much that was not found in the Church of the apostle's day, as recorded in Scripture, and we wonder how this came about. In the prophetic history of Christendom, which is before us in these communications to the seven Churches, we can trace out the origin and development of these evil things and unscriptural principles found in present Christendom. We have already seen in the Ephesus period the rise of Nicolaitanism, that unscriptural system of dividing the Church into the two classes of clergy and laity. Now in Smyrna we have that which is called the "synagogue of Satan."

These who said they were Jews were claiming to be the real people of God, the inheritors of the spiritual privileges of ancient Israel . They were insisting on Jewish principles and sought to put the Gentile believers under the law and on the same ground as Israel of old under the covenant of the law of Sinai. They were active already in the days of the apostles who had to contend with these Judaizing teachers. In Acts 15:1-41 we read about men who came down from Judæa and taught the Gentile believers at Antioch that except they were circumcised after the manner of Moses they could not be saved (Acts 15:1). Paul and Barnabas dissented and disputed with them over this. At Jerusalem some spoke up in the Church and said that it was needful to circumcise the Gentile converts and command them to keep the law of Moses. Peter replied that this was putting a yoke upon the disciples "which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear, but we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (Acts 15:5, Acts 15:9-10). In the epistle to the Galatians the apostle Paul contended strongly against those who were preaching another Gospel than that of the grace of God which he had received from Christ and preached. "There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ: But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:7-8). It was these Judaizing teachers of the law who were likewise troubling the Galatian saints and perverting the Gospel. To add one single thing to the Gospel of Christ's death for our sins, His burial and resurrection for our justification, as that which is necessary for salvation, is to pervert the Gospel.

Satan was thus at work in the very early days of the Church seeking to distort and corrupt the pure Gospel of the grace of God. This effort of the adversary continued against the Church and the Gospel, and now it had become a systematized thing in the time of Smyrna as these teachers sought to bring Judaism into the Assembly of God and mixed law with grace, and blasphemed against the faithful believers. A party of highest pretensions was now formed and they were the corrupters of the Gospel, the destroyers of living Christianity and deceived by Satan. The Lord pungently calls them the "synagogue of Satan," for that is what they were morally, as led on, gathered together and energized by Satan for his evil purposes. The Patristic party, commonly called "The Fathers," were the leaders in this evil of systematically Judaizing the Church. This evil

work had already gained a foothold in the professing Church in this Smyrna period, and today we find Christendom permeated with Judaism, or Judaistic principles, mixed up with true Christianity, law and grace mingled and the Gospel of the grace of God perverted and corrupted thereby.

Contrast of Christianity With Judaism The Church of the living God is not a continuation of Judaism which was established by God in the Old Testament; therefore its principles cannot be carried over into the Church or adapted in any form. The Church is in greatest contrast with Judaism.

Israel, or Judaism, was an earthly body, a company on earth, a nation with earthly hopes. There was a special class of priests, the inner sanctuary where the priests alone could come, and the people worshipped afar off. There were continual sacrifices for sin and a veil that shut the worshipper out from the presence of God. The congregation was composed of a mixed company of those who had true faith and those who did not, believers and unbelievers mingled together on a national basis, and seeking to keep the law as a ground of acceptance before God. The term "synagogue" means "a gathering together," and that was the principle of Judaism, a mixed people gathered together with nationalistic hopes on earth. The Church, or Assembly of God, is in vivid contrast to all the foregoing characteristics of Judaism. It begins with the foundation of the cross of Christ, a complete and finished work for sin, the resurrection and ascension of Christ into heaven for us, the descent of the Holy Spirit, Who has formed the One Body of believers and indwells and unites them to the risen, glorified Head in heaven. The veil is rent and all genuine believers in Christ are priests and are privileged to draw nigh to God into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19-22; Hebrews 1:1-14; 1 Peter 2:5). As united to Christ in glory, the Church is called to be a heavenly people and given the heavenly hope of being with the Lord in His glory. Its hopes and blessings are not earthly at all as Israel's are. The word translated "church" in our King James Bible is "ecclesia" and means "a called out assembly." It signifies a people called out of the world to be true to their rejected Lord, and who are joined to Him in the glory and are waiting for His return. The true Church is not a mere gathering together of a mixed company of converted believers and unconverted or natural men, as in the Jewish synagogue. Thus we see that there is the greatest difference between the Assembly of God; the Church, and Judaism with its temple and synagogues.

Christendom Characterized by Judaism

Today we find that the professing Church has lost most of the characteristic features which should distinguish her from Judaism, and that for the most part Christendom is characterized by the principles of Judaism. It has become a mere synagogue, a gathering together of a mixed company of believers and unbelievers, seeking to keep the law of commandments for salvation or as a rule of life. It has settled down on earth and does not look for the Lord to return. It has become a camp like Judaism of old, though wearing the cloak of outward Christianity. The revival of Judaism and the bringing of its principles into the professing Church has destroyed the true character of Christianity, and this system and state of things is morally that which the Lord called the "synagogue of Satan," in Smyrna .

Thus the call to the believers of old to leave the camp of Judaism and go forth unto the rejected Christ is applicable to Christians today. "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13:13). The earnest believer, who would honour Christ and keep

His Word, must go forth unto Christ alone and separate from the camp of Christendom with its Judaistic principles. The Call to the Hearing Ear

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 2:11). Here, as in each of the messages to these Assemblies in Asia, the Lord calls for the hearing ear to hearken to what the Spirit has to say to the Churches. The individual is made responsible to hear and to yield obedience to the message of the Spirit. We are to hear the words of comfort, encouragement, promise of future reward, and the exhortation to be faithful unto death. The Promise to the Overcomer

"He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (Revelation 2:11). Such was the encouraging promise to each believer who would overcome the fear of physical death in faithfulness to Christ, and the temptation to deny Him and live on earth. It was also for the one who would overcome the blasphemy and ridicule of those of the synagogue of Satan, the perverters of the Gospel. The second death, which should not touch the overcomer according to the promise here, is spoken of in Revelation 20:11-14. There the great white throne judgment scene is described when the unsaved dead will be raised and God will deal with the resurrected body and the soul and spirit of those whose names are not found written in the book of life. "And death and hell (hades) delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."

Death is the place of the body in the grave and hades is the temporary abode of the departed souls and spirits. At the time of the great white throne judgment, the graves will give up the bodies and hades will give up the souls and spirits of those who had no part in the previous first resurrection, spoken of in Revelation 20:5-8. Then the complete person, body, soul and spirit, of all these resurrected dead will be cast into the lake of fire forever. This is the second death of eternal separation from God, the awful, everlasting portion of all who die outside of Christ the Saviour.

Though many of the Christians in this Smyrna period were killed because of their faith in Christ and thus experienced physical death, they became overcomers and were given the blessed assurance of immunity from this second death of eternal judgment. Blessed and comforting hope for them and for believers at all times.

03.11. The Message to Pergamos

The Message to Pergamos (Revelation 2:12-17)

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith He which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is" (Revelation 2:12-13). The name Pergamos means "much marriage." Paul wrote to the Corinthian Assembly that he was jealous over them with a godly jealousy, for he had espoused or betrothed them to one husband, that he might present them as a chaste virgin to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2). The true Church is engaged to Christ and will be married to Him, its Lover and Bridegroom, following His coming for His bride. But this blessed espousal and marriage was quite forgotten during this third period in the history of the professing Church, which is prophetically before us in Pergamos. It was indeed a time of "much marriage," for while professing to be true to Christ, the Church became united and married to the world, and that the heathen, Pagan world. The Changed Conditions In Pergamos we have quite a different state of things from that of the previous period given in Smyrna . There the Church was relentlessly persecuted by ten Roman emperors for over one hundred years. But now with the victory of Constantine over Maxentius for the throne of the Roman Empire, the persecution against the Christians ceased. Constantine claimed to have had a vision of a flaming cross with the inscription, "By this conquer." He then adopted the sign of the cross as the imperial standard of his armies and declared himself a convert to Christianity, though he was never baptized until near the end of his life.

He was victorious in battle and a public edict in favour of the Christians was issued in 313. Constantine soon saw the superiority of Christianity and that the Christians were better citizens, etc., so he issued an edict against Paganism in 324. Christians were given posts of honour and bishops of the Church sat on thrones with the nobles of the empire. Constantine took his place, now more openly to the whole world as head of the Church; but at the same time retained the office of the Pontifex Maximus - the high priest of the heathen. This he never gave up.

Thus the Church and State became allied. The Church and the world joined hands in an unholy marriage. Allegiance to Christ and His Word was sacrificed, and the Lord had to say Pergamos was dwelling where Satan's seat was. History records the accounts of gorgeous heathen temples and the vestments of its priests consecrated for Christian service. In order to reconcile the priests and the people of heathenism to the new order of Christianity, many Pagan rites and ceremonies were adopted by the Church. Heathen festivals were changed into Christian days, a notable example being so-called "Christmas."

December 24 or 25 was observed among all Pagan nations in honour of the birth of the son of the "Queen of heaven." No such festival as Christmas was ever heard of in the Christian Church until the fourth century. It was then in the time of Constantine that December 25, the Pagan holiday, was adopted by the Church, and called "Christmas" and made the birthday of Christ. (See "The Two Babylons" by Alex Hislop.) In this way the Pagans and the Christians were united in an unholy alliance and Pagan corruption with a Christian name attached to it. In Pergamos Satan is within

the Church as a deceiving serpent and seducer. He could not crush the Church by persecution, but he now succeeds within by corrupting it. The Presentation of the Lord To this Assembly at Pergamos, and to the professing church of this third prophetic period, the Lord presents Himself as the One who has "the sharp sword with two edges" and as the One who knows their works and where they were dwelling, how they had settled down into Satan's throne in compromise and indifference to His glory and holiness. As previously remarked in these studies, the approach of the Lord to each Assembly is always in keeping with the condition He finds, and therein is the key to the situation and the remedy for what is wrong. The sharp sword with two edges is the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12). Revelation 18:15 tells us that when the Lord comes in judgment He will smite the nations with a sharp sword that goes out of His mouth. In addressing Pergamos as the One who has the sharp sword with two edges, the Lord is warning the Assembly that He is about to search into and declare her true spiritual condition and judge her state by the Word, which is sharper than a two-edged sword.

Because His holy Word was no longer the standard of judgment in the Assembly, He comes with the sword to prove that the Word never lost its power in His hands. If Pergamos had been under the action and power of the Word of God, they would not have compromised and come under the power of the seducer, Satan, and fallen to where his throne was. The Word of God is the detective power of God to deal with evil; it is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" and reveals everything. The Assembly of Pergamos had failed to use the sword of the Word; it had not tried those who said they were apostles and were not, as Ephesus had done, and was commended of the Lord for it. Therefore its condition was very serious and evil. Paganism had now become mingled with Christianity, as well as Judaism, which we saw coming in the Smyrna period. This is a practical word for the Church of Christ at all times. The Word of God is the sharp sword which we must depend upon and use against the enemy and his wiles. If we cling to His Word and abide by it, we will be preserved from the evil of Satan's world. It is by the neglect of God's Word and indifference to its precepts that the Church falls into seductions and snares of its arch-enemy and becomes corrupted as Pergamos was. The Psalmist could say, "By the Word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer" (Psalms 17:4). So we are exhorted to "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil," and to take "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:11; Ephesians 6:17). The remedy for every wrong and evil condition is the Word of God and its use in the power of the Spirit. The Lord further says to Pergamos, "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat (throne - N.Tn) is". Pergamos was the capital of the Roman province of Asia at this time and was famous for its Pagan rites and ceremonies. From this centre heathenism reigned and idolatry spread all over Asia . The persecutions against the Church had issued from Pergamos. Now in this Pergamos period of the Church it was dwelling where Satan's throne was.

Satan is now "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4); therefore the world is the place of his throne. The force of the Lord's words, then, is that the Church of the time of Pergamos was dwelling in the world of Paganism; Judaism and Christianity had united under Satan's seductions. The Church had thus forgotten her heavenly calling and her heavenly character and had settled down in the world where its Saviour and Lord was rejected and cast out. The professing Church and the world had joined hands and enjoyed themselves together. The result of this unholy alliance was, as another has said, "the world has become a little churchy, but the Church has

become immensely worldly." If this was true in the Pergamos epoch of the professing Church, alas, how definitely the Church of this present, age is characterized by union with this present evil world system. May the Lord's presentation to Pergamos with the sharp sword, and His words as to where it was dwelling, speak to our hearts and consciences with "the sword of the Spirit; which is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). The remedy for every wrong and evil condition is the Word of God and its delivering power of the Spirit. The Lord's Commendation

"Thou holdest fast My name, and hast not denied My faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth" (Revelation 2:13). In spite of the declension in Pergamos and their settling down in the world and dwelling where Satan's throne was, there was still that which the Lord could commend. They held fast to His Name and had not denied the faith. This was especially true during the great Arian controversy that took place in the fourth century.

Arius held that Christ was the first and noblest of all created beings which God had made and thus denied Christ's Godhead and deity. The council of Nice, Bithynia was called in June, 325, by Constantine to consider this grave error. 318 bishops and a large number of priests and deacons were present. Many bore the marks of suffering from the former persecutions. Constantine acted as moderator and the doctrine of the trinity and the true Godhead of Christ was maintained by this council.

We may observe in passing that this serious and erroneous teaching as to the Person of Christ which Arius promulgated early in the Church's history, and was defeated at the council of Nice, is actively being propagated today by so-called "Jehovah's Witnesses." It is an old lie of Satan to rob Christ of His glory as the Creator and Son of God and should be vigorously resisted, as it was in the Pergamos period when the commendation of the Lord, of holding fast to His Name and not denying the faith, was given. The name "Antipas," whom the Lord speaks of as "my faithful martyr, who was slain among you," means "against all." Nothing else certain is known of him, but he apparently stood alone for the Lord and suffered martyrdom for Christ. This name, it would seem, stands for the individual faithfulness of many during this time of general declension and activity of Satan as the seducer.

Athanasius, who became the bishop of Alexandria and was greatly used of God in preserving the Church from the Arian heresy, is a notable example of one standing against all, as the name of "Antipas" indicates. He disregarded the imperial edict of Constantine, who changed his mind two years after the Council of Nice as to Arianism and commanded that Arius and his friends be received into the Church. Athanasius endured persecution, calumny, exile and frequently endangered his life in defence of the great fundamental truth of the Godhead of Christ. Many years after the council of Nice, when the Arian party was gaining influence, Athanasius was summoned before the Arian emperor who demanded that he cease his opposition to the teaching of Arius and receive Arians. When Athanasius refused, the emperor reproved him bitterly and said, "Do you not realize that all the world is against you?" The champion of the truth answered, "Then I am against all the world." He was a true Antipas and a noble example for believers at all times. Thus the faith of God, the revelation of Himself in Christ the Son, was maintained amidst much evil and the Lord noticed it all and commends it. The Censure

"But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate" (Revelation 2:14-15).

We read about Balaam in Numbers 22:1-41; Numbers 23:1-30; Numbers 24:1-25; Numbers 25:1-18; Numbers 31:16; 2 Peter 2:15-16 and Jude 1:11. There we learn that he was a hireling prophet that hired out to Balak, king of the Moabites, to curse the children of Israel because he loved the wages of unrighteousness. Failing in this, he gave counsel to seduce Israel into uniting with the Midianites and the Moabites and brought about the evil of Israel joining themselves unto Baal-peor and the judgment of God thereupon in the plague (Numbers 25:1-18; Numbers 31:16). He thus sought to break down Israel's separation from the heathen nations and succeeded in measure in this by teaching Balak to put a stumbling-block before the children of Israel and caused them to eat things sacrificed unto idols and commit fornication.

Association with the world is the doctrine of Balaam and the breakdown of separation from evil. It is the hireling prophet who for his own ends seeks to destroy all godly separateness. There were such in the Church of Pergamos who held Balaam's doctrine, and the Lord held the Church responsible for this evil tolerated in their midst. Those who held this doctrine were undoubtedly such of the clergy who preached for hire and advised the mingling of the Church with idolatrous temple worship. History records that many new ceremonies, the burning of candles in daylight, incense, images, processions, purifications, and innumerable other things were introduced into the Church in the fourth and fifth centuries.

Idolatry and fornication were the two sins Israel was led into by the counsel of Balaam. These evils were strongly denounced by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:15-18 and 1 Corinthians 10:19-28. In Pergamos the teachers of these impure practices were sheltered in the Church and the result was the moral ruin of all contaminated by these unholy and evil teachings and practices. The angel, or representative of Pergamos, is not charged with this evil of Balaam, but with allowing it. They had not resisted this evil. They were indifferent to these evil teachers of Balaamism and Nicolaitanism, and thus the sin of Pergamos was toleration of evil and evil men. Alas, how true this is of the professing Church of today. May we heed the censure of the Lord to Pergamos. From 1John 5:20-21 we learn that any object outside of Jesus Christ is idolatry, and 2 Corinthians 6:14-16 and James 4:4 would teach us that friendship and illicit intercourse with the world is fornication. The Lord further charged Pergamos with having those who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing He hated. We noticed that in Ephesus there were "the deeds of the Nicolaitanes" and they were hated by the Assembly and commended of the Lord for it. Here there is an advance in this evil, for it is now "the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes" and the propagators of it were in the bosom of the Church. It was now systematized evil taught and practised. The Assembly had settled down in the world where Satan's throne was and was tolerating what the Lord hated. It cannot be otherwise when the Church abandons its pilgrim character; separation from evil cannot be maintained while dwelling in the world. This applies individually and collectively. As we have fully gone into the meaning of "Nicolaitanism" in the message to Ephesus, we shall not speak further of it here.

Parable of the Mustard Seed

We have been drawing attention in previous studies to the similarity between the seven parables of Matthew thirteen and these seven Churches. The third parable likens the kingdom of heaven to a grain of mustard seed, which the Lord says "is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof" (Matthew 13:31-32). How true this is of the state of the professing Church in this third period of Pergamos. Christianity and the Church had spread from the small, genuine mustard seed to a great tree of prominence and now was giving shelter to evil teachers and evil doctrine, which the birds symbolize. How true also of Christendom today, and how sad that it is so! The Call to Repentance

"Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth" (Revelation 2:16). The Lord thus seeks to arouse the whole church to self-judgment for allowing the evils of Balaamism and Nicolaitanism among them and for their dwelling where Satan's throne was. He calls upon the entire church to repent, to change their mind about these allowed evils, to judge them, and to take sides with Himself against them. The Lord was still looking for repentance in the Church during this Pergamos period: there was the possibility of recovery to proper conditions and characteristics of the Assembly pleasing to the Lord. This was only possible by genuine repentance and clearance of the evil.

Confession of sin, self-judgment and godly sorrow is true repentance. This is ever the only way of recovery from evil and its snares. If things come into our lives or into the Assembly of God that are contrary to the Word of God, we must exercise self-judgment and repentance, individually or collectively. Thus we shall be delivered from them, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (2 Corinthians 7:10). The Lord said to Pergamos that if they did not repent and judge the evil among them, "I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth." Notice, He did not say, "I will fight against you," but "against them." He never fights against His own people, but He will fight against those who bring in evil doctrines and practices, such as those who held the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes at Pergamos. If we do not judge evil that may arise in the Church, the Lord will do it Himself, and then it will be to our shame. He is zealous of His glory and of the holiness that becomes His house. The sword of His mouth, with which He will fight against evil doers, is the Word of God. His Word is "sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12), and has come from His mouth (Deuteronomy 8:3); it is God-breathed. He presents Himself to Pergamos as the One who has the "sharp sword with two edges" (Hebrews 4:12), and when He comes to earth in judgment He will smite the nations with a sharp sword that goes out of His mouth, as we have previously noted in Revelation 19:11-15. That living Word we have and must use it against evil that may arise in our lives or in the Church.

There is a remarkable example in the history of this Pergamos period of the Church of the Lord fighting against evil doers with the sword of His mouth. Arius, who had held the evil teaching of Christ being a created being, later presented a plausible confession of belief in a general way in the Holy Trinity. Constantine accepted his confession and sent for Alexander, Bishop of Constantinople, and told him that Arius must be received into communion on the following day, which was Sunday. Alexander, who was almost 100 years old, was greatly distressed by the Emperor's orders. He entered the church building and earnestly prayed that the Lord would prevent such a profanation. During the evening of the same day, Arius was talking lightly and

triumphantly of the ceremonies appointed for the morrow. But the Lord heard the prayer of His aged servant and that same night the evil Arius died. The Lord stepped in and did not allow the reinstatement into the Church of this heretical teacher. (Miller's Church History, Vol. 1.) The words of the Lord in this verse of Revelation 2:16 give us a principle of utmost importance as to cases of discipline in the Assembly, or as to the state of the whole Church. As another has remarked: "If evil is permitted to pass unjudged in the Assembly, owing to the indifference or laxity of the saints, or from unwillingness to face the difficulty, the Lord will first wait in His long-suffering, and seek through one and another, by whatever means He may choose, to awaken the consciences of His people; and then, if they fail to respond to His exhortations, He will come in Himself and deal with the evil which the Assembly had failed to judge, and in which all, by refusing to judge, had become implicated. It should never be forgotten that holiness becomes the house of God and that 'our God is a consuming fire'" (Psalms 93:5; Hebrews 12:29) (E. Dennett).

Further Errors in Pergamos Period

Before going on with the message of the Lord to the Assembly at Pergamos, we desire to draw attention to further errors which came into the professing Church during this third period of its history. As Christianity outwardly flourished under the protection of Constantine and the profession of Christianity became the sure way to wealth, honours and positions of eminence in the empire, thousands flocked around the churches at the Easter and Pentecostal festivals waiting to be baptized. Some writers speak of twelve thousand men, besides women and children, having been baptized in one year in Rome . As the Church gained in numbers, power and popularity in this outward way, the Bishops said, "We have been looking for Christ's reign, but we have been wrong. Constantine 's empire is Christ's kingdom." Thus the hope and truth of Christ's coming was given up by the Church at this time and it no longer looked for His promised coming and reign. The term "catholic" was now invariably applied in all official documents to the Church also. It was now the universal official Church upheld by the State.

During this period superstition had by this time taught men to connect the forgiveness of sins with the rite of baptism. In the fourth century the observance of this rite had an immense place in the minds of professing Christians. They believed that the waters of baptism purified the soul completely. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, who died around 200, is the first of the Fathers that alludes to infant baptism. "Regeneration, born again, baptism, are used as interchangeable terms, and as meaning the same thing, in the writings of the Fathers" (Miller's Church History, Vol. 1).

Anxious parents hastened to have their delicate infants baptized, lest they should be under the curse of original sin, and the man of the world delayed his baptism until the near approach of death so that he might pass from the waters of regeneration to the realms of blessedness untainted by further sin. Thus this serious error of baptismal regeneration, instead of the Scriptural teaching of regeneration and new birth by the water of the Word of God and the Spirit's power, came into the professing Church so early and remains the accepted doctrine of multitudes in Christendom today.

It was during this time that the unscriptural system of monasteries, nunneries and asceticism sprang up. Such austerity of life, of harsh treatment of the body, etc., was more an offspring of heathen philosophy than of the teachings of Christ. The words of the apostle in Colossians 2:23 surely apply to these things. The Call to the Individual

"He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 2:17). In such a state of ruin and declension, as found in Pergamos, the Lord appeals to the individual, to whoever has an opened ear to hear what the Spirit has said to the churches, and will heed and consider the censure of the Lord. He that has an inward ear opened by the Holy Spirit will listen and receive the communications given by the Lord. We are thus reminded of our individual responsibility. The Lord speaks to us individually, even today, about the state of His Church and would have us hear the voice of the Spirit and overcome evil. The Promise to the Overcomer

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Revelation 2:17). The Lord always looks for overcomers. Those who heed the Spirit's call and message are empowered to overcome the evils pointed out and are given precious promises. The overcomer in Pergamos would judge the evil of the doctrine of Balaam and of the Nicolaitanes and mourn about the dishonour done to the Lord's name by toleration of them in the Assembly. We become overcomers by faith, and by the power of the Spirit as we act upon God's Word (1 John 2:14; 1 John 4:4; 1 John 5:4). The teachers of the doctrine of Balaam in Pergamos taught Christians to eat things sacrificed to idols, but to the overcomer of this evil the Lord promises the hidden manna for his food. This would remind us of the pot of manna that was laid up in the ark as a witness and memorial of God's faithfulness in giving Israel manna for forty years in the wilderness. The manna was Christ in His walk down here in humiliation in wilderness circumstances. The hidden manna is Christ in heaven, hidden from the eyes of men, but treasured by the Father. As we behold Him there by faith, we are reminded of what He has been down here, tempted and tried in all points as we are, but victorious over all. Recalling Him thus to mind, we feed upon Him and are sustained and strengthened in secret communion. Christ the great Overcomer is the food for the child of God, and as he feeds upon Him strength is gained for overcoming and he too becomes an overcomer.

If we think of the hidden manna as that which the overcomer will be given in heaven, it would tell us of how wilderness experiences of feeding on Christ down here will bloom afresh in glory. There we will enjoy anew all that Christ has meant to us in this wilderness life, how He sustained us as the manna for our souls. The Lord also promises the overcomer a white stone with a new name written thereon. A white stone was used in the social life and judicial customs of the ancients. Days of festivity were noted by a white stone and a host's appreciation of a special guest was indicated by a white stone with a name or message written on it. A white stone meant acquittal in the courts and a black stone, condemnation. Voters would also indicate on a white stone the name of the candidate they approved of and put it into an urn. This promise of the Lord thus indicates His personal delight and approbation of each individual overcomer. It is a precious, secret token of His approval, a secret between Himself and the faithful heart, for no one knows the name written on the stone but the recipient. What an encouragement for the overcomer who incurs the disfavour and opposition of those who tolerate evil. May we seek to be overcomers for Christ in every evil day.

03.12. The Message To Thyatira

The Message To Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29)

We have previously pointed out that these messages to the seven Churches are divided into two groups of three and four, and that the conditions found in the first three churches were temporary, whereas the state of things manifest in the last four continues on to the end of the Church's history. In our present studies we come to the fourth Church, Thyatira, which thus stands in the middle of the whole series of the seven. Three Church periods preceded Thyatira and three other prophetic periods follow it. The first three culminate in Thyatira and she becomes the embodiment of the three stages of departure which we have seen in Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamos. The last three Church periods spring from Thyatira. With this fourth prophetic period of Thyatira there is thus a change, for we have here a condition of things that continues on in Christendom to the coming of the Lord for the true Church and goes on to its culmination in Babylon the great of Revelation seventeen. In that chapter we read of its destruction shortly before the Lord's coming to earth in judgment. The development of evil in the professing Church, which we shall find set forth in the message to Thyatira, is therefore a permanent condition and represents a system of religious evil that is with us today.

We shall see that there is no hope of recovery held out in Thyatira; there is no prospect of deliverance of the whole Church from its evil condition, for the Lord gave her space to repent and she repented not, therefore there is the pronouncement of judgment to come. But a remnant is recognized within Thyatira that is not characterized by the evil and for the first time we hear of the Lord's coming in these messages to the seven Churches. His coming is held out as a bright hope of full deliverance from the ruin and departure that has come into Christendom. This hope is given to the remnant and overcomers. The Name Thyatira

One authority on the meaning of names has given the meaning of Thyatira as "odour of affliction" (JB Jackson). Another has said that it comes from two words, one of which means "a sacrifice or incense offering," the other word meaning "that which goes on continually." Combining these two thoughts, the suggested interpretation of the name Thyatira would be "continual sacrifice." Another suggested meaning is "one unwearied in presenting sacrificial offerings." All these meanings point us to that which characterized the system of religious teaching which sprang up in this Thyatira period.

Thyatira gives us a picture of the professing Church during the Middle Ages, the period in history called the Dark Ages. The Thyatira period began around 600 AD and continued to the eve of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. It was in the seventh century that the Bishop of Rome was first recognized as the vice-regent of Christ on earth. He became the pope and the acknowledged head of the Church. This was the beginning of the Roman system of the Papacy. It is during this period of Thyatira that Roman Catholicism developed and became the corrupt Church of systematized evil which we know today. During this time Christianity became heathenized.

One of the great characteristics of the Church of Rome is the sacrifice of the mass which it is always offering for sin. This is truly a distinguishing feature of the Roman system, and thus the meaning of Thyatira, "continual sacrifice," "one unwearied in presenting sacrificial offerings," aptly characterizes the Church of this period. The continual or oft repeated sacrifice of the mass is Satan's insult to the one perfect and complete offering of Christ for sin and is a denial of the finished work of the Saviour for sinners. "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once for all. . . By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:10; Hebrews 10:14). The Approach of the Lord

"Unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass" (Revelation 2:18). The character in which the Lord presents Himself to these Assemblies of Asia is always in keeping with the condition and state of the Church addressed. Here He presents Himself in the most searching and positive character of the Son of God with absolute authority and penetrating judgment. The Lord approaches Thyatira in a sterner and severer manner than He does to any of the other Churches, for there was the greatest wickedness and presumption here. The woman Jezebel called herself a prophetess and was teaching and seducing God's servants into spiritual fornication and idolatry. This is what the system of Rome has ever done. She claims to be a prophetess and to speak with authority from God and puts the seal of God on the most terrible iniquity. The Church of Rome presumes to be the chaste bride of Christ and against this self-asserting, pretentious bride the Lord has to assert His authority as the Son of God in judgment. He is "a son over His own house" (Hebrews 3:6), and as such He wields authority and is judicially prepared to act against evil. The Church of the living God is the house of God on earth and holiness becometh His house (1 Timothy 3:15 ; Psalms 93:5), therefore the Lord will not tolerate evil in His house, but will judge it in His own time. Here in Thyatira the Lord presents Himself in His full Deity and in all the power of His person as Son of God. He comes in all His authority and exaltation and would assert His headship over His rebellious Church that was setting up her own authority. His eyes are like unto a flame of fire. Eyes speak of intelligence, understanding and discernment, and the symbol of a flame of fire would convey the thought of all-searching, penetrating, discerning judgment. The prophet Habakkuk said, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Habakkuk 1:13). "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Proverbs 15:3). The feet of the Lord like fine brass indicates the firmness with which He deals with sin in divine righteousness. Brass typifies God meeting man in his responsibility according to divine righteousness. This is set forth in the brazen altar of the tabernacle. There God met man in his sins and His claims in righteousness were met by the offered sacrifice. In this presentation of the Lord we see that He comes to deal with the public state of the Church as His responsible light-bearer and witness in the world. He would remind her of His absolute authority over the house of God, of His discerning and piercing judgment and of His firm purpose not to pass over sin. Though He is the God of all grace and love, He is also holy and righteous and will deal in justice and judgment. These solemn characteristics are ever true of the Lord and abide as principles in His dealings with single Assemblies and with individual believers everywhere. The Commendation

"I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first" (Revelation 2:19). Following the severe presentation of the Lord to

Thyatira in the previous verse, which we dwelt upon in our last study, it is rather astonishing to read these wonderful words of commendation. But it is ever the way of our Lord to commend first all that which is good and worthy before dealing with that which is grievous and evil to His holy eyes. In spite of the awful evil system that was rising up and ruling during this Thyatira period of the dark Middle Ages, there was a faithful remnant of true believers (spoken of as "my servants" and "the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine"), whose faithfulness and piety shone out the brighter in the increasing evil.

It is ever a principle in Scripture that whenever there is corporate failure, the faithful remnant becomes invested with the collective position before God. So on this principle the Lord is able to impute to Thyatira all the merits, faithfulness and activities of the devoted saints in her midst, and speaks of their work, charity, service, faith and patience as that of Thyatira. This group of faithful souls is looked at positionally as the true Church of that period; the Lord recognized them as His people in that day. Of this class of faithful witnesses another has well written: "Nowhere, perhaps, is there a more deeply interesting story; nowhere longer and more unwearied patience; nowhere truer, or perhaps so true, hearts for Christ and for the truth, and for faithfulness to Him against a corrupt Church, as in the saints of the Middle Ages. Through toil and labour, hunted and punished in spite of a system far more persevering, far better organized, than heathen persecutions, violent as for a time they surely were; with no fresh miraculous revelation, or publicly sustaining body, or profession of the Church at large, clothed with universal acknowledgement as such, to give them confidence; with every name of ignominy that people or priest could invent to hunt them with, they pursued their hemmed but never abandoned way with divinely given constancy, and maintained the testimony of God and the promised existence of the Church against the gates of Hades, at the cost of rest and home and life and all things earth could give or nature feel. And Christ had foreseen and had not forgotten it" (JND). Of the things which the Lord commends among these faithful believers in Thyatira, love is mentioned first. It is the great characteristic of the divine nature and of God who is love. From it springs all spiritual activity. In the more correct translations, faith is mentioned next. It is "faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6) and is manifested in service to God and man. Then there was patience, or endurance amidst much persecution. "And the last works (to be) more than the first" (N.Tn). There was increasing devotedness amongst these saints. As the evil increased, their energy and zeal for the Lord also increased, so that the Lord could say their last works were more than the first. Love and faith, which were missing in the Assembly at Ephesus, were found amidst this remnant in Thyatira, and in this sense their state was above that of Ephesus where first love had been departed from.

One of our wonderful hymns was written by Bernard of Clairvaux during this dark and evil time. The following lines of its first and second verses are a sample of the devotion which the Lord was commending as answering to the love of His heart:

"Saviour, the very thought of Thee

With sweetness fills the breast;

But sweeter far Thy face to see,

And in Thy presence rest.

"No voice can sing, no heart can frame,

Nor can the mind conceive,

A sweeter sound than Jesus' name

To sinners who believe."

Church history records the names of many of these faithful witnesses who remained true to the Lord Jesus and did not go on with all the evil of the corrupt Church of this period. Some of these were known as Nestorians, Paulicians, the Albigenses of the southern province of France on the western side of the Alps, and the Waldenses of the valleys of Piedmont on the eastern side of the Alps. Multitudes of these faithful ones were slain by the wicked Roman System during these Dark Ages. This faithful remnant is another evidence of the truth of the oft-mentioned statement that God never leaves Himself without witnesses. No matter how dark and evil the days may be, God ever raises up some faithful ones who walk in separation from the evil and bear testimony to Himself. Such witnesses of faith stand out like bright, shining stars on a dark night. May we seek to be such in the present evil day. The Lord's Censure

" But I have against thee that thou permittest the woman Jezebel, she who calls herself prophetess, and she teaches and leads astray My servants to commit fornication and eat of idol sacrifices. And I gave her time that she should repent, and she will not repent of her fornication. Behold, I cast her into a bed, and those that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, and her children will I kill with death; and all the assemblies shall know that I am He that searches the reins and the hearts; and I will give to you each according to your works" (Revelation 2:20-23, N.Tn).

Having expressed His appreciation and commendation of faithful devotedness of the godly remnant, the Lord now speaks of that which He had against the angel or messenger of the Church in Thyatira. He points out the grievous evil that was permitted in the Assembly, which called forth His severe condemnation and impending judgment. A wicked woman Jezebel was allowed to teach and to lead astray God's servants into spiritual fornication and idolatry. The apostle Paul was led by God's Spirit to write: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (1 Timothy 2:11-12). Thus for a woman to teach in God's Assembly is definitely contrary to God's Word, not only in the days of Thyatira, but in the present day. The evil results of a woman teaching in Thyatira were manifest in her leading astray servants of the Lord into the worst evils. As Eve was deceived by Satan and led Adam into sin, so Satan has often worked since. When the woman gets out of her ordained sphere and takes the place of a teacher, she is often deceived by Satan and leads others into evil teachings of which he is the father. Many of the false and unscriptural religious cults of our day were started by women. But there is more serious evil here than just the matter of a woman teaching in the Assembly. It is a principle in Scripture that a woman in a type is expressive of a state and condition of things, whereas a man indicates more the activity and conduct in that state. Remembering also that the state in each of these seven Assemblies of Asia is prophetic of the various conditions that would exist in the whole professing Church in its seven different stages, we have here in the activity of the woman Jezebel a state of things set forth that was to be found in the Church at large of the Thyatiran period in the Middle Ages. The professing Church as a whole was to be characterized by this thing of Jezebel claiming to be a prophetess and teaching and seducing the Lord's servants into idolatry. It is the Church taking the place of a prophetess and

teaching. In Ephesians 5:1-33 we are told that "the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands. . This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:23-24, Ephesians 5:32). This Scripture teaches us that the Church as the bride of Christ is to be subject to Him as its Head and Bridegroom. Therefore the Church is never to teach or to set herself up as an authority of Christ her Head. The Word of God has come from Christ to the Church and she is to be subject to it. Christ teaches by His Word, as ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of His servants. In Thyatira we have the woman in the man's place and the Church substituting herself for Christ, claiming the authority of a prophetess for her teaching. As previously pointed out in our introductory remarks on Thyatira, it is the Church of Rome that is clearly symbolized here by the woman Jezebel teaching and leading astray God's people into idolatry and evil. In Romanism it is the Church that teaches and sets herself above the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures. Their subtle propaganda is set forth today in national magazines and newspapers, claiming that the Roman Catholic Church existed before the Bible, and that "the Catholic Church is the mother of the Bible." Rome claims that she has given us the Bible, that she has sole authority from Christ and alone can interpret the Scriptures, that all other interpretations of it are private interpretations and wrong. This is the evil woman teaching and usurping authority over Christ and His Word. In Pergamos the Lord spoke about the doctrine of Balaam and his activity of evil in the Old Testament. Here in Thyatira the Lord speaks of the evil of Jezebel. This was the name of a well-known wicked queen in the days of Elijah the prophet of the Lord. She was the "daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians" and wife of Ahab, king of Israel (1 Kings 16:31). Her father had been a priest of Astarte (Venus) and the family was famous for intense devotion to Baal. She fed 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah at her table and slew the prophets of the Lord (1 Kings 18:13; 1 Kings 18:19; N.Tn). Her whoredoms and witchcrafts are spoken of as "so many" by king Jehu who was used of God to execute judgment upon her and the whole house of Ahab (2 Kings 9:22). We are also told that she was the instigator of all the evil which her husband Ahab did. "There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up" (1 Kings 21:25). Such was the character of wicked Jezebel and such has been the manifested evil, idolatrous and murderous character of the wicked, ecclesiastical system of Rome which Jezebel typifies in Thyatira. The Woman Leavening The Meal The fourth parable of Matthew 13:1-58 is similar to what we have set forth in the activity of Jezebel in Thyatira, the fourth Church. The Lord said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" (Matthew 13:33). Leaven is always a type of evil in Scripture (1 Corinthians 5:6-8), The three measures of meal speak of Christ the Corn of wheat, the Bread of life, or the doctrine of Christ. The woman here is doing that which was forbidden in the Scriptures; she was stealthily hiding leaven in the pure meal, a thing prohibited in the meal-offering (Leviticus 2:11). The purpose was to leaven and corrupt the whole of the pure meal. Thus there is the thought of evil and opposition to the Word of God in the activity of this woman. This is what we have in Romanism as presented in the figure of the woman Jezebel and her activity. The Papal system has corrupted the pure doctrine of Christ by introducing into it her evil doctrines one by one. She has ever mixed into the truth of God the leaven of her own heathen ideas and then presents this mixture as a dogma of the Church, which must be accepted under pain of excommunication. It is a system of development as can be seen by an examination of the

origin of her doctrines and practices. One discovers that they came into being one by one through the centuries.

Prayers for the dead began around 300 AD; the worship of Mary and the saints around the fifth century; Lent was imposed around 998; priests were forbidden to marry by Gregory VII in 1079. Prayer beads were invented by Peter the Hermit in 1090 and auricular confession to the priest was instituted by Pope Innocent III in 1215. The sacrifice of the mass came into existence in the eleventh century and the doctrine of transubstantiation was made an article of faith in 1215. At the Council of Trent in 1546 Roman Catholic traditions were placed on the same level with the Holy Scriptures and the Apocryphal books were added to the Bible. At this same Council command was given that the doctrine of Purgatory be held, taught and preached everywhere. It had been formally received as a dogma of the Church in the time of Gregory the Great in 600. (See Miller's Church History, Vol.2, and "Roman Catholic Inventions.") Thus the woman has been busy mixing leaven into the pure meal and Jezebel has taught and led astray souls into idolatry. In spite of this history of development in doctrine and practice over a period of centuries, the Church of Rome claims to be the first Church and that which Christ established on earth with Peter as the first pope. As Romanism has greatly revived and presses its claims with great activity in our present day, many are becoming ensnared and led astray by its subtle propaganda. Therefore it is necessary that we speak out clearly and faithfully in warning souls as to this false and evil system of Jezebel teaching which the Lord condemned in Thyatira. The true Church, founded by Christ on Himself as the Rock foundation (Matthew 16:16-18; 1 Corinthians 3:11), is found in the book of Acts and in the Epistles of the New Testament. It is "the church, which is His body" and the glorified Christ is its only head. It is the "church of the firstborn," those born again and baptized by the Spirit of God into this divine body, and whose names are written in heaven (Ephesians 1:21-22; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Hebrews 12:23). In the Epistle to the Romans, written by the apostle Paul around 60 AD, we can see what characterized the first Church there and note how vastly different are the doctrines and practices of the Papal system at Rome today. The Church of Rome developed out of the evils which came into the professing Church in the Pergamos period. It is the first corrupt and idolatrous Church, where the elements of Judaism and heathenism were combined into a fixed, systematized teaching under the garb or cloak of Christianity.

"Leads Astray My Servants" This is what the Roman system has done according to God's indictment. She has turned the great mass of professing Christians from Christ to Mary; from Christ to the Pope; from the one offering of Christ to the continual sacrifice of the mass; from the Word of God and its certainty to the uncertainty of the traditions of men; in a word, from Christianity to Christianised and Judaised paganism.

"She teaches and leads astray My servants to commit fornication and eat of idol sacrifices." The end result and aim of popish error, blasphemous teachings, and wicked practices is to get her adherents to "commit fornication and eat of idol sacrifices." Fornication, used as a symbol here and elsewhere, signifies for those naming the Name of the Lord: forbidden intercourse with the world. What was begun by Constantine in the Pergamos period was consummated in the papacy. Its taking upon itself to combine secular and spiritual power universally was the masterpiece of the papacy. The unholy union of the Church with the world was perfected as a system in Catholicism and this is spiritual fornication which the Lord abhors. Eating of idol sacrifices is association with heathen idolatry and fellowship with demons, for "that what (the nations) sacrifice they sacrifice to

demons, and not to God" (1 Corinthians 10:20, N.Tn).

"My servants" were those who were pious and groaned and suffered under the forced worship of images and the idolatry of this Jezebel system. They were God-fearing and had a conscience about God's Word and a love for the Saviour; yet they never left Romanism and their consciences were stupefied by the acceptance of the clergy and the doings of Jezebel. The Lord regarded their piety and felt it keenly that they were led astray by this evil system. No Repentance In the messages to the first three Churches the call to repentance is addressed to the whole Church, for there was still hope that they would repent and return to the Word of God and forsake the evils. But there in Thyatira the Lord has to say, "And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds" (Revelation 2:21-22). Opportunity had been given to the Jezebel-system of Rome to repent of her evil deeds, but she was hardened in her sinful ways and would not repent.

God raised up numerous witnesses for Himself during this period of Thyatira, in Church history, who spoke as men of God and cried against the evils. In the fourteenth century John Wycliffe boldly spoke out in England against iniquities of the Church of Rome and maintained the absolute supremacy of the Holy Scriptures, which he succeeded in translating into English, giving England its first complete Bible. Jerome Savonarola faithfully preached in Italy in the fifteenth century against the evils of the Church, but was hung and burnt by order of the pope. There was John Knox in Scotland, Martin Luther in Germany, Zwingli and Calvin in Switzerland and many others who were mighty reformers whom God raised up to call Rome to repentance; but instead of heeding the call and repenting, she persecuted God's servants and slew many of them.

Papal Rome has continued unto this day unrepentant and will do so until its final judgment as given in Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24. Therein we see her character is darker and her deeds blacker than in the past. Popery is utterly corrupt and her character fixed and unrepentant to the end. Therefore her judgment is fixed also.

We should notice in passing that it is a principle with God always to give opportunity for repentance before judgment is executed. "I gave her space to repent." Thus He has ever acted from the beginning of time and so should His Church and His people act. Even when speaking of the judgment that He would execute upon Jezebel, the Lord adds, "except they repent." Such is His long-suffering and yearning over His professed people for their recovery from evil. The Threatened Judgment

"Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds" (Revelation 2:22). This is judgment of the severest character upon Jezebel and those that committed adultery with her. There would be forced association with those she seduced into evil with her, and great tribulation and desperate distress for those who tampered with this evil system. All who in the public Christian world of the day meddle and associate with the corruption of Christianity, represented by Jezebel in Thyatira, will be cast into great tribulation and distress, unless they repent. Besides general tribulation, there may be a reference here to the time of great tribulation that shall come upon apostate Christendom after the Lord has come for His bride, the Church (Matthew 24:21-31). And I will kill her children with death" (Revelation 2:23). There are not only those who have had to do with this Jezebel system and

associated with her in evil, but there are her children, those who have been begotten and formed by her evil teaching and are the expression and proponents of her views. There is full judgment for such who have become the devotees of Rome and perpetuate this evil system. There is spiritual death as well as physical death, and also the second death of eternal separation from God (Ezekiel 18:4; Revelation 20:12-15). This judgment may be twofold, present judgment in divine government in time, and future judgment when every one will receive according to his works. The Lord adds, "and all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (Revelation 2:23). By divine visitation of judgments in time all the churches would know that they have to do with a holy and righteous God who searches the hearts and is not indifferent to evil. He deals with each one individually in discriminating judgment, according to each one's works. Though God moves slowly in utmost patience, judgment is sure to come.

Encouragement To The Remnant

"But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come" (Revelation 2:24-25). Here the Lord addresses in tender and gracious tones the faithful remnant, which we have previously spoken of as existing in this period of Thyatira, and which may have its representatives or counterpart even in this present day. They did not have this evil doctrine of Jezebel and had no part in the iniquity which the Lord charged Thyatira with. Their piety and other commendable features we have already noticed in the first part of the Lord's message. They were hounded and persecuted by the papal system; and it would seem were accused of being linked up with the depths of Satan. So the words of the Lord, "The depths of Satan, as they speak," would imply. But the Lord saw and knew everything and vindicates these faithful ones. He knew it was a great effort for them just to hold on to what they possessed in the Lord, so He considerately and tenderly says, "I will put upon you none other burden, but that which you have already hold fast till I come." The Saviour would encourage this godly remnant to hold fast, to persevere amidst the corruption, subtle seductions and persecutions until He would come.

Here for the first time in these messages to the Seven Churches we have the remnant specially marked out as separate from the body in general and as no longer in connection with the Church as a whole. Until now there was held out the possibility of recovery of the Church from its fallen condition, but now the Church-State corruption had become so hopeless that the Lord directly addresses the faithful remnant and points them to His coming for encouragement and hope. All hope of recovery of the whole Church from its fallen condition is abandoned now. For the first time also in these epistles the Lord's coming is spoken of. They were not to expect the Jezebel system to get right; they were to look for His coming as the only deliverance out of evil. This was and is the comfort held out to the saints in the midst of the wreck of everything here. The fact of the Lord's coming being brought in is also an indication that the Thyatira condition of things will continue until His coming for the true believers. So we have in Thyatira a state of things that goes on to the end. But there is also a godly remnant there that the Lord recognizes and will come for.

Promises To The Overcomer

"And he that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father. And I will give him the morning star" (Revelation 2:26-28). With such precious promises the Lord would encourage the overcomers in the evil day of Jezebel rule of corruption. They were to hold fast and keep His works to the end and thus overcome by the Spirit's power the evil about them and the seductions and persecutions of papal Rome and of the nations around. With Christ they would have power over the nations that were now persecuting them by the false Church's instigation, The time shall come when Christ will rule over the nations and execute judgment upon them and set all right. When He does so, the Church of the true believers and overcomers will be associated with Him in it. The overcomer shall share in the glory of the Messiah's kingly rule, and receive power from Him to rule as He received power from His Father. (See Psalms 2:8-9 which is referred to here.) The large, grand and public character of the promise of authority over the nations exceeds anything we have yet had in the previous promises to the overcomers in these messages. This is the very thing that was the goal of the corrupt Church in the Thyatiran period and has ever been the goal of papal ambition - power over the nations. She literally and metaphorically put her foot on the neck of kings, and in the coming day of satanic rule Babylon the Great will sit upon the beast, the head of the revived Roman Empire . What the corrupt Church seeks in her own power, Christ promises to the overcomer that walks in separation from evil and takes the place of reproach now. Precious encouragement to every overcomer in any period of the Church's history

"And I will give him the morning star." This speaks of more intimate and more heavenly blessing, for it is Christ Himself in His heavenly beauty as the proper portion and hope of the Church while waiting His return. He says, "I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning Star" (Revelation 22:16). The morning star shines in the last hours of the night and is the harbinger of coming day. It appears before the rising sun. So the coming of Christ for His Church shall precede His coming to earth as the "Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings" (Malachi 4:2), His coming to rule the nations. They undoubtedly did not understand all this in the Thyatiran period (this truth was fully brought out in the Philadelphian period), but the blessed person of Christ as the morning star was the portion of the overcomer to enjoy here. It is the watcher who is awake when all are slumbering that sees the morning star. May we today be such overcomers who enjoy Christ as the morning star in our hearts and look for His coming to receive us unto Himself in the Father's house on high. The Call To Hear

"He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 2:29). As in each of these messages to the churches, there is the appeal to the hearing ear to heed the voice of the Spirit. But here we have a change from the order of things in the previous three churches. There the call to the hearing ear precedes the promise to the overcomer, but now in Thyatira we have the call following the promise to the overcomer. The exhortation to hear the call of the Spirit is no longer addressed to the whole Church, as previously, but follows the word of cheer to the remnant and the promises to the overcomer. It is therefore spoken to the overcomers, for only such could be expected to have a hearing ear to truly hear and consider what the Spirit had to say to the churches. The professing body of the Church is treated as incapable of repentance; space was given her to repent and she willed not to do so. Hence the separated remnant who overcome are appealed to, to hear what the Spirit has to say in this message to

Thyatira and to the other churches also. As ever, it is an appeal to the individual to have an opened ear to the words of the Spirit. May our ears be such in this present evil day of Laodicean lukewarm indifference to Christ.

03.13. The Message To Sardis

The Message To Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6) In the message to Thyatira we found that great evil had come into the professing Church during this period of its history. Elements of Judaism and heathenism were adapted and a fixed system of evil teaching had grown up under the form of the wicked prophetess Jezebel who led God's servants into spiritual fornication and idolatry. This we have seen has its full counterpart and fulfilment in the Roman Catholic system which continues today unrepentant and unchanged as to its evil character. In the Church at Sardis we have prophetically set forth a fifth period of the professing Church or Christendom. In this Assembly, and the period of time it represents prophetically, we find nothing of the great evils the Lord spoke of to Thyatira. It is evident from the message to Sardis that there has been a new and fresh beginning. The Lord says, "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard and hold fast, and repent" (Revelation 3:3). The Reformation

Between the periods of time in the history of Christendom, which were characterized by Thyatira and Sardis conditions, there was the mighty work of the Spirit of God which is known as The Reformation. This developed over a period of several hundred years and reached its fullness and climax in the early part of the sixteenth century. At this time the Protestant movement came into being. It is important to notice that the Church at Sardis does not prophetically represent the Reformation itself, but rather the state and condition into which Protestantism afterwards fell when the power and impulse of that mighty movement of the Spirit of God had died down.

Before considering the Lord's message to Sardis, it will be helpful to us if we contemplate for a little some of the features of the work of the Spirit of God in the Reformation and the instruments which He used. In our previous study we spoke of John Wycliffe, born in England around 1320, who first translated the Bible into English. He was called "The Morning Star of the Reformation." John Huss, born about 1373, and Jerome (1363-1416), both of Bohemia, carried on the torch of truth from Wycliffe. Then there were the Moravian brethren who were distinguished by missionary zeal and labours. They published in the Bohemian language a translation of the Bible around 1470.

One of the greatest and most valuable accomplishments of the Reformation period was the translation of the Scriptures into the languages of the day and the multiplication and dissemination of the Bible into the hands of the rank and file of the people. During the Thyatira period the Bible was practically a lost book. It was only translated into Latin, which very few people knew, and only a few copies were in existence as everything had to be copied out by hand, for the art of printing was not yet invented. This period is known in history as the Dark Ages. Then evil flourished because the Bible was a hidden book and its light did not shine forth abroad. The Psalmist says, "The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psalms 119:130). When the Word of God shines out, it gives light which dispels the darkness and evil. When it is withheld, evil flourishes.

God was going to recover His truth and give the light of His Word to the people. For this the Scriptures had to be translated from the original Hebrew and Greek tongues, also from the Latin, into the vernacular of the common folk, and means devised for rapid multiplication of the translated Bible. So He raised up men of God who were able to translate the Scriptures, and He so ordered that the art of manufacturing paper was developed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and that the art of printing was also invented. The first book to be printed was the Holy Bible, which Gutenberg printed in German around 1456. Now the Word of God was rapidly multiplied and placed in the hands of the people.

One of the most prominent figures of the Reformation was Martin Luther whom God used mightily to recall souls to the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures and to the recovery of the great gospel truth of justification by faith alone. Born in Germany in 1483, he saw a Bible for the first time in a library at Erfurt in 1505. After years of deep exercises of soul, he was brought into true peace with God by the words of Romans 1:17, "The just shall live by faith." Henceforth he became the great proclaimer of justification by faith as the peculiar doctrine of the Gospel and exposed the falsehoods of Popery and brought the reign of Rome to an end. In 1517 Luther nailed his theses to the Church door at Wittenberg . Therein in ninety-five propositions he challenged the whole Catholic Church, as to its sale of indulgences. In 1520 he burned publicly the papal bull which ex-communicated him from the Church and thus threw off the yoke of Rome and became an open and uncompromising antagonist of this evil system. This was a bold and courageous step and the nation of Germany rallied around God's faithful servant and the power of Rome was broken for the first time in one thousand years.

After Luther's courageous and firm stand before the august assembly of over five thousand of the great ones of the day at the Diet of Worms in April 1521, he was carried off by friends to the Castle of Wartburg where he was secretly kept in safety for nearly a year. Here he commenced the greatest and most useful of all his works, the translation of the Bible into the German language. He published the New Testament in September 1522 and a second edition appeared in December 1522. It spread from one end of Germany to the other and to many other countries, and was read by almost everybody throughout Germany . It became the book of the people, a national book, the Book of God. The Reformation was now placed on the solid foundation of the Word of God. By 1533 fifty-eight editions of the New Testament had been printed. By 1530 the whole Old Testament had been translated by Luther with the help of Melanchthon and other friends and published. Now the complete Word of God was in the hands of the people in their own tongue and God Himself could thus speak to the hearts and consciences of men.

We should also state that previously the Bible was translated into various languages by individual reformers in different countries. An Italian version appeared in 1474, a Bohemian around 1470, a Dutch in 1477, a French in 1477, and a Spanish translation in 1478. Thus the Spirit of God wrought and heralded the approach of the coming Reformation. Now through the work which God wrought by Luther and the awakening in the German Empire, the revival of the Gospel and the work of the Reformation spread and deeply affected the general state of Europe . Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Switzerland, Belgium, Italy, Spain, France and the British Isles were affected by this movement of God's Spirit and "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed," as in the days of Paul at Ephesus (Acts 19:20).

However, the Papal party of Rome continued in hateful opposition to the reformers and determined to exterminate by fire and sword the Lutherans. The first Diet of Spire was called in June 1526 and a second Diet was convened in the same place in the spring of 1529. The immediate extinction of the heresies of the Reformation by the sword was the avowed purpose of the Roman party at the second Diet. The German princes united and protested and then presented in writing a noble manifesto of remonstrance and protest. On this account the Reformers were designated The Protestants. Thus the term originated which is still used to denote all Churches and groups which protest on principle against the doctrines, rites and ceremonies of the Church of Rome. The principles of the protest of the Reformers at Spire and that of the Confession of Augsburg of 1530 were embodied in the national constitution of Germany and the German princes pledged themselves to defend these beliefs by the armed might of governmental power. Now Protestantism assumed a political form and the moral glory of the Reformation declined. National Churches were formed in various countries with evangelical creeds as part of the government's statesmanship, and political power to back them up. When the political element entered and soon dominated, when the outward aggressive action and protection of the Reformed Churches fell into the hands of the princes of governments, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17), was exchanged for the carnal sword and the arm of flesh, and there was no further spiritual advancement after that. The glow and fervour of the truth of God and the first flush of blessing soon passed away and a cold, lifeless formalism and empty profession set into Protestantism. The Lord was not depended upon, the Spirit of God was grieved and there was no longer the power of the Spirit of God manifest as in the previous days.

Thus the words of the Lord to Sardis, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" (Revelation 3:1), aptly describes the state of Protestantism when the power, bloom and impulse of the Reformation had died down and dead formalism and empty profession, devoid of spiritual life, had set in. This is the state and condition of Christendom in the period which Sardis prophetically sets forth. With this brief outline of the Reformation as a background before us, we will be better enabled to understand the message of the Lord to Sardis and to enter more fully into the significance of its details which shall occupy us in our next studies. The word "Sardis" is thought to come from a Hebrew word "sard" which means "a remnant." A remnant has been drawn out of the awful system of evil that developed during the Tyatiran period, out of the Jezebel system of Romanism. But, as we saw in our previous study, many joined themselves to this true remnant of Protestantism for political and other reasons, and it was now in the main a lifeless profession which the Lord characterized as having "a name that thou livest, and art dead." The Presentation Of The Lord

"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" (Revelation 3:1). The Lord presents Himself to Sardis as the One that has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars. The Spirit of God speaks of power, for the Lord told the disciples, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8). The seven Spirits of God would indicate fullness of power, so the Lord would remind the Church at Sardis that He has fullness of power and that fullness was available for them in the Spirit of God. In Revelation 5:1-14 the Lord is seen as the Lamb "having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (Revelation 5:6). The

Church is composed of believers "built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22), and is the sphere of the Spirit's operations and power. But the Assembly at Sardis showed no sign of the Spirit's activity. It was cold, formal and dead. The Spirit of God had been grieved, neglected and set aside. The arm of flesh had been relied upon by the Protestant movement of this Sardis period as the power to combat the evils and power of Rome, instead of counting upon the power of the Spirit of God. In the beginning the reformers were empowered by the Spirit of God, but as the Reformation continued they made the great mistake of leaning on the arm of secular governments for protection and help. The Spirit of God had raised up a testimony against the evil in the professing Church, but He was not counted on or depended upon to maintain this testimony. Kings and princes of governments were tired of the heavy yoke of Rome and were glad to get rid of it, so joined in with the Protestant movement because of natural animosity against this evil system. Thus men not born of the Spirit of God or led by the Spirit became a vital part of the Protestant movement of this Sardis period and it soon became a lifeless profession devoid of spiritual power.

Because of all this the Lord presents Himself to Sardis as the One who has the seven Spirits of God, fullness of power. If they needed strength and power in the great conflict against evil, it was available for them in the Spirit of God. The same is true for the Church of God today, and for the individual believer. We can "be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16). The professing Church today is characterized by the same neglect of the Spirit of God and leaning on the arm of flesh as was true of Protestantism in its early days, so the Lord's words to the Church in Sardis are of practical application in the present time also. The Lord also says that He has the seven stars. We noticed in our earlier studies that Revelation 1:20 says: "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches." They are the messengers, or those bearing responsibility in the Assembly and set therein to give heavenly light. He would remind us that He is the One who gives gifts to His Church and that all who would be instrumental lights for Him must connect everything with Himself and own His authority and count upon Him for every need. He has the seven stars. All true ministry must come from Himself by the Spirit of God. Do we need teachers to teach the Word of God? Do we need pastors to shepherd and care for the flock of God? Do we need evangelists to preach the Gospel? Are overseers needed in the local Assemblies? Yes, all these gifts and ministrations are needed in the Church and are to be had from Christ, the living Head of the Church. He can and does raise up such and we are to look to Him for them instead of establishing a ministerial system as Protestantism has done. The Lord would cause the Assembly at Sardis and ourselves today to realize that, though there is failure and lack of power in the Church, there is neither failure nor lack of power or ministry with Himself. All fullness abides in Him for His Church, but He must be counted and depended upon in faith to receive of His fullness. The reader will remember that we pointed out in the introduction to these studies the contrast between the presentation of the Lord to Ephesus and to Sardis. In Ephesus the Lord presents Himself as the One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, but here to Sardis He does not say that He has the seven stars in His hand. The reason for the difference is that in the time of Ephesus, the period following the apostles, the Lord was owned as the Head of the Church and relied on as such. But this was not true of the Church in the Sardis period, and neither is it true of the professing Church today. Christ is not owned as the living and only head of the Church. Men are given that place and looked to instead of the living Lord of glory. The stars are not seen and owned as being in the right hand of the Lord. The real failure of Protestantism

has been, and is, in not giving the Lord Jesus Christ the supreme place of authority and headship and depended upon as such. The Lord's Censure

"I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" (Revelation 3:1). This is the Lord's estimation of the works and state of Sardis, of the professing Church of the Sardis period, yea, of Protestantism. He who has eyes as a flame of fire that can pierce through everything, and He who alone can fully perceive and give a right estimate of every action and work has this to say about the works of Sardis .

It surely is not a commendation that the Lord gives here, as we have seen He always gave first in His messages to the previous four Churches in connection with the words, "I know thy works." It would seem that there is practically nothing of commendation in the Lord's message to Sardis . The only word of approval He could give was the recognition of the little remnant in verse four "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy." These few the Lord could commend for their separated walk, but the general state of Sardis was displeasing to Him and He could only speak words of censure, exhortation and warning to this Church as a whole.

"Thou hast a name that thou livest." There was much orthodoxy and correctness of doctrine in the creeds of the Protestants. Much truth was expressed and owned as facts, and is still found among some Protestants today, but there was no spiritual life. It was, and is today, a cold, formal, lifeless, orthodox thing without the power of the Spirit of God. There is the appearance of life, but He who pierces through the outward covering of formalism says, Thou art dead. The name and outward profession belies the actual condition. There was a name to live, but it was only a name, a profession without spiritual life. Protestantism that began with the Reformation, which was in the power of the Spirit at first, now was in the sleep of death. It settled down in worldly associations and had a reputation of life, but without spiritual vitality.

Such was Protestantism after the freshness and impulse of the Reformation passed away, and such is Protestantism, and worse, today. The evangelical movements of the day are outside the recognized organizations of Protestantism and are not properly represented by Sardis . It was the formation of National Churches, supported by the State, which enrolled practically everyone, regardless of spiritual life or regeneration by the Spirit of God, that characterized the Protestant movement in the Sardis period and helped bring about this lifeless profession of dead orthodoxy which is still with us today. The Call To Watchfulness

"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God" (Revelation 3:2). The assembly at Sardis had not been watchful, other wise the condition of lifeless profession that prevailed would not have developed. The result of this lack of watchfulness was that the things which remained were drooping and ready to die out. There had been activity of spiritual life, but now only forms of life remained and these were languishing and needed strengthening. So the Lord calls this assembly and the church of the Sardis period to watchfulness and activity in the Spirit, also to repentance, as we shall later see. The call to watchfulness and to strengthening the things which remain is a practical word for the church at all times. In Mark 13:33-37 the Lord spoke to the disciples and exhorted them four times to watch. "Take ye heed, watch and pray . commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore . And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." The apostle Paul warned the elders of the church

of Ephesus about men that would arise, "speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them," and then exhorted, "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:30-31). The enemy of our souls is ever busy to corrupt and destroy and has many subtle ways of working. It was while men slept that the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat as our Lord foretold (Matthew 13:25). May we heed His call to watchfulness, individually and collectively, and seek to strengthen the languishing testimonies to His Name that remain. Let us not seek to tear down and just criticize, but to labour to build up and strengthen what is of God. "Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thessalonians 5:6).

"I have not found thy works complete before God" (N.Tn). This is the Lord's estimation of the works of the Sardis period. Though there had been a work of God during the Reformation time, there was much incompleteness that characterized the teaching of the Reformers. There was a great lack of Scriptural fullness on the great doctrines of divine revelation. There was gross fundamental blunder about what they called "the sacraments" - retaining baptismal regeneration and the error of consubstantiation as to the Lord's supper. There is not a trace of the true doctrine of the church of God in the history of the Reformation. The exalted truths of the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, where the characteristics of the Church and this present dispensation of grace are set forth, were unknown to the mass of the Reformers.

Then as regards Christian practice, believers were put under the law as their rule of life, and remain so even today in Protestantism, whereas Christ Himself is the rule of life for the Christian. The universal doctrine of all Protestant bodies is to put souls justified by faith under the law as a rule to live by. The effect of this is a ministry of death, for the law is called "the ministration of death" in 2 Corinthians 3:7. Souls under the law never enjoy settled peace and the walk is enfeebled.

Thus there is an incompleteness of works. The believer has in Christ a complete sacrifice, a perfect conscience ("hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience"), and is "perfected for ever" by one perfect offering (Hebrews 10:10-22). This is practically unknown in Protestantism, for the pure and full Gospel is not preached when grace and law are mixed together.

Remember - Hold Fast - Repent

"Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent" (Revelation 3:3). The Lord recognizes that there had been a work of grace in the Reformation period. Much truth had been heard and received. There was now the light of the open Bible and all Europe had been stirred by the Reformation. People crowded into halls and listened four to five hours at a time to discourses from the Bible. The truths of the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures, justification by faith and liberty of conscience were among those heard and received. But now these truths that had been recovered and rejoiced in were fading from memory and conscience. Protestantism was now living on its fame acquired by her successful conflict with the papal system of Rome, living on her name and forgetting the precious truths that had been revealed to her. The Lord therefore calls Sardis to remember how she had received and heard, to hold fast to the truths given forth by the Spirit of God, and to repent as to her declension and fall from her former condition. This was the way of recovery and restoration which the Lord in grace set before Sardis. He would lead them to repentance by reminding them of how they had received the Word, of the heartiness, fervour, zeal

and love with which they had received the truth when the light of the open Bible had shined upon them and delivered their souls out of the darkness of Catholicism.

Another point to observe here is that the Lord holds individuals and assemblies responsible according to the light received. Sardis will be judged by the light it received at the Reformation and according to the privilege of the light of an open Bible. What declension and apostasy one finds in Protestantism today, where in many places the Bible is no longer believed to be the inspired and infallible Word of God, and the doctrine of justification by faith is regarded as a relic of a past age. What judgment will befall such.

Applying the words of the Lord to Sardis to ourselves individually today, how searching is the call to remember how we have received and heard, and to hold fast and repent! How much precious ministry we have heard during our years! Do we prize and value the truth of God made known to us and do we hold it fast? Or do we prefer earthly and temporal things above the revelation of Christ and His Word? Many things in our lives show that we do not value the truth we have heard and received. Therefore the call to repent in self-judgment is the word of the Lord to us personally, Judgment Threatened

"If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee" (Revelation 3:3). The Lord had counselled the assembly to watch; now they are threatened with judgment if they do not do so and recover themselves from their fallen state. He would come upon them as a thief unexpectedly. This is very solemn, for the Lord will come upon the world "as a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2). Sardis is thus warned, that if she does not watch and repent, she will be treated as the world and judged by His coming upon them as a thief, unexpected and unwelcomed.

What a sad thing when the professing Church, yea, Protestantism with its great name, is reduced, in God's estimation and judgment, to the level of the world. The church in the Sardis period was one with the political powers and was thus identified with the world. It would therefore have to share the world's judgment when He comes in sudden surprise as "a thief in the night." The present state of Protestantism is no better, but worse than after the Reformation, and the Lord's warning of coming judgment is of solemn present application. To the faithful remnant in Thyatira the Lord spoke of Himself as "the morning star" and called upon them to "hold fast till I come" (Revelation 2:25; Revelation 2:28). How lovely is the way He presents Himself to them as regards His coming. To the true believers who look for their Lord and Bridegroom to come again, He will appear as "the bright and morning star" (Revelation 22:16) and translate them into the glory of His Father's house (John 14:2-3). But to the world and the professing church that does not know Christ and is not looking or waiting for His coming again, He will come as a thief with sudden destruction and judgment. The Lord's words to Sardis, as to His coming upon them as a thief, shows that they were not looking for Him to come again. Surely this is true of present day Protestantism at large and of the world. They are not looking or waiting for the Lord to come again, and His coming will be unwelcome and unexpected as the coming of a thief. But the word to the true child of God is, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day (the day of the Lord) should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light" (1 Thessalonians 5:4-5). May we be as the Lord exhorted his disciples in Luke 12:35-36 : "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord." The Remnant

"Thou hast a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy" (Revelation 3:4). As in Thyatira a faithful remnant was marked out by the Lord, so in Sardis there were faithful individuals whom the Lord distinguishes from the professing mass as pleasing to Himself. They had not defiled their garments by association with the world as the rest in Sardis had, but maintained personal purity by separation from the evils about them. Holiness of walk and conduct characterized them as they kept themselves, not only from the evils of the world without, but from the contaminations within the sphere of God's professing people. They were thus separated ones, though few in number and unpopular down here, but personally known to the Lord and worthy to walk with Him in white. They had learnt what James describes as "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is . . . to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

"They shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy." Such is the precious promise of the Lord to these faithful ones in Sardis, and to all who endeavour to walk in separation from evil and keep themselves unspotted from the world which has Satan as its god and prince, be it in the commercial, political or religious aspect. This promise shows how much He appreciates such fidelity to Himself, and the reward is that of closest association and identification with Himself. They had preserved their integrity and moral purity here, and would walk with Him there in robes made white in the blood of the Lamb. Their distinguishing recompense in glory is thus related to the moral separation and purity which they maintained down here. Such faithfulness to the Lord will not be forgotten, but marked out forever above. May these precious words of Christ encourage believers today to walk in separation from all that is displeasing to the Lord and not of Himself.

It is noticeable that in the message to Thyatira the Lord addressed the faithful remnant with the words, "as many as have not this doctrine" etc., while to Sardis He says, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments." Would this indicate that there were more faithful ones in the godly remnant of the Thyatiran period than in the remnant of the Sardis period? Are we to gather from the words "as many", said to Thyatira, and the words "a few names", spoken to Sardis, that there were, and may still be today, fewer godly, separated souls in formal Protestantism than in the Roman system of the Thyatiran period? This implication would seem to be there. At any rate, there were only a few in Sardis who were found pleasing to the Lord. The surprise is that there were not more separated ones in the midst of the Protestant movement that had rebelled against the corruptions of Thyatira.

Fifth Parable

We have been pointing out a similarity in the parables of Matthew thirteen to what we find in the seven Churches. Sardis is the fifth Church. And the fifth parable in Matthew 13:1-58, "the kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field" (Matthew 13:44). This parable pictures the Lord Jesus Christ giving up all and buying the world, the field, with His blood that He might have the treasure hid therein, His saints individually, or, as some believe, Israel. The similarity of this parable with Sardis seems to be in that of the treasure hid in the field. Amidst the great professing mass of lifeless Protestantism that was walking with the world, there were these few hidden ones of the remnant who were true believers. They were like a treasure buried in the field, known and valued by their Lord.

Promises To The Overcomer

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels" (Revelation 3:5). A threefold reward is promised to the overcomer here. (1) He would be clothed in white raiment. (2) His name would not be blotted out of the book of life. (3) The Lord would confess his name before His Father and before His angels. Those who would remember how they had heard and received and held fast and repented and acquired the condition of those who had not defiled their garments, would thus be manifest as overcomers and be brought into the class of the faithful remnant who shall walk with the Lord in white. The white garments, which the Lord promises to clothe the overcomer with, are the appropriate and public recognition by the Lord of the pure character of their walk down here. In Revelation 19:1-21 the wife of the Lamb is seen arrayed in "fine linen, clean and white," and this, the explanation that follows says, "is the righteousnesses of saints" (Revelation 19:8, N.Tn). The Lord thus assures that every act of faithfulness of the overcomer, which led to separation from unholiness here, shall have its future recompense in an eternal display in His presence. The second promise to the overcomer here is that his name would not be blotted out of the book of life. This raises the question as to what the book of life is and whether it is possible to have one's name blotted out of it. Careful study will show a distinction between the book of life mentioned here and the "book of life of the Lamb," or "the Lamb's book of life" which Revelation 13:8; Revelation 21:7 speak of. These are two different books or records. The book of life seems to be a general registry of profession, where a name may be enrolled, but upon investigation the title to such enrolment may prove false and it will have to be erased. Of old the thought of being blotted out of God's book has been expressed. Moses, in a wonderful moment of intercession for sinful Israel, said to God, "if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." To his plea Jehovah replied, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book" (Exodus 32:32-33). In Psalms 89:28 David requests for the enemies of the Lord, "Let them be blotted out of the book of life, and not be written with the righteous" (N.Tn). Then in Revelation 22:19 the following warning is given that, "if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city," etc.

All these Scriptures indicate the possibility of the Lord's blotting one's name out of the book of life, which is a general book of profession of divine life. God always takes people up on their profession and holds them responsible accordingly. It is a book of life the Lord is speaking of, and if it becomes manifest that persons are not characterized by divine life, but are dead as the mass in Sardis were, their names may be blotted out as no longer entitled to remain on the register. The Lamb's book of life contains names written therein before the founding of the world, as Revelation 13:8; Revelation 17:8 tell us: "written from (the) founding of (the) world in the book of life of the slain Lamb" (N.Tn). This is the book of the counsels and purposes of God, who knows the end from the beginning and wrote therein, before the course of human responsibility began, the names of all who were chosen in Christ before the foundations of the world were laid (Ephesians 1:4). These are true, born-again believers in Christ, whom He calls, justifies, and glorifies (Romans 8:30), and works in their hearts by His Holy Spirit that has sealed and marked them off as His own forever. The Lamb's book of life is the record of reality and out of that book no name is blotted out. The book of life is the record of the true and false confessors of Christ. Those who have only a

false and lifeless profession will have their names blotted out of that book. Those in Sardis who overcome, by hearing the call to repentance and reality of life in Christ, are assured that their names will not be blotted out of God's book of life. How comforting and assuring is the promise to the overcomer.

There is another comforting thought in this promise. Those who seek to be true to Christ and in obedience to Him are compelled to stand apart from evils and religious corruptions. This incurs the anger and opposition of religious leaders and such an one's name may be blotted out of human Church registers. The Lord assures such an overcomer that, though man may blot out his name and excommunicate him as an evil one, He will not blot out his name from His book of life. The third promise given to the overcomer in Sardis is, "I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." Not only will the Lord keep the overcomer's name in His book, but He promises to confess that one's name before His Father and His angels. It is like a commanding general that gives reports of the battle to headquarters of the commander-in-chief, and mentions for recognition the names of those who were outstanding in duty. Such names come up for honourable mention and reward. How cheering to the soldier, who under fire of great difficulty has remained at his post of duty, to have his name thus cited before his superiors and commander-in-chief. But such a mark of earthly honour and distinction is not to be compared with the unspeakable honour and favour of grace that will be bestowed upon the overcomer by the Lord when He confesses his name for faithfulness and obedience and recognition before His Father and His angels. May we value the Lord's approval, recognition and promise of reward and honour, and be satisfied to be little thought of here, but stand as true overcomers for Christ. The Call To The Hearing Ear

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 3:6). The message of the Lord to the Assembly at Sardis closes with the call to the individual that has an ear to hear, to heed and consider what the Spirit says to the Churches. This appeal to the individual ear is a manifestation of the intense yearning of the Lord over His saints, and of His eager desire that His words of warning, reproof and exhortation might find an entrance into their hearts and produce a full response to His faithful love. The Lord always looks for those who have opened ears to hear and consider what He has to say. He once called people unto Himself and said, "Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand . If any man have ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 7:14-16). All have ears that can hear, but who has an ear to hear and heed what the Lord has to say? To such who have opened ears and hearts the Lord appeals, even today in this day of Laodicean indifference. There is much for present day believers to hear, heed and lay to heart of the Lord's words to Sardis .

"Unto The Churches" May we call attention at this point to the words, "what the Spirit saith unto the churches." This phrase is found in each message to the seven Churches in connection with the call to hear what the Spirit has to say. Notice, it is not what the Spirit saith unto the Church, to the particular Church addressed, but "unto the Churches." What the Lord had to say to each Assembly was to be heeded by the hearing ear in all the Assemblies. What the Spirit spoke to each particular Assembly is thus designated as addressed to "the Churches" and was for the concern and the exercise of heart of all, not just for the local Assembly spoken to. This shows that there is a local and a corporate responsibility in the Church and that there is no such thing in Scripture as independency of Assemblies. The teaching of some, that each Assembly is an independent unit, responsible only to the Lord for its own affairs, and having no responsibility as to the affairs of

another Assembly, is unscriptural and not in harmony with the call of the Lord to each of the seven Churches in Asia to "hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The primary responsibility, of course, rests with each local Assembly, but responsibility as to maintaining the holiness of the Lord's house, etc., does not end with the local Assembly. There is also a collective and corporate responsibility of Assemblies as members of the One Body of Christ.

03.14. The Message To Philadelphia

The Message To Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13)

Introduction

We have come now in our studies to this wonderful Assembly at Philadelphia to whom the Lord could address such commendatory words of approval. It is the Church of Sardis the Lord found practically nothing which He could commend them for; in the Assembly at Philadelphia there was nothing He needed to censure them about. In the message to the former we find no words of commendation to the Church as a whole; in the message to the latter we find no censure or blame, but words of greatest comfort and encouragement, because, though there was great weakness, all was pleasing to the eye and heart of the Lord. In Sardis there was the coldness of spiritual death, but in Philadelphia there is found the fervent warmth and glow of devotion to Christ. Christ Himself is all the glow and beauty in this Assembly, for He was everything to them. Sardis had a name to live, was occupied with her reputation in the world and a place among men. Philadelphia says nothing about herself, but sought to keep His Word and honour His Name. Therefore the Lord speaks for her and commends all that was so pleasing to His heart. Everything commendable in Philadelphia is connected with Christ.

Philadelphia means "brotherly love." This gives us a key to the lovely features and characteristics of this Assembly. Divine love was known and manifested. We shall speak more of this later. The Lord so ordered it that, at the time when the apostle John was given these messages to write to the seven Assemblies in Asia, there was actually in the city of Philadelphia an Assembly in this good spiritual condition which Christ speaks of with divine pleasure. This good state of things in the Assembly at Philadelphia was prophetic of a revival period in the history of the professing Church when the Lord recovered a remnant to the full truth of the Gospel and of the Church of God, and there was a return to the original, spiritual features of the Assembly. It stands for a broad and well-defined movement in the history of the Church that was characterized by moral suitability to Christ rather than ecclesiastical position. That is the prophetic aspect of the message to Philadelphia .

Looking at the Assembly in Philadelphia from the practical viewpoint, we can observe that which meets the Lord's approval and notice the features which delight His heart and merit His commendation. The Philadelphian Church is a marvellous example of devotion and faithfulness to Christ for Christians at any time and in all ages. Its beautiful characteristics, as set forth with such joyful approbation by the Lord, must have always appealed to Christians. This Assembly represents a moral condition which in a remarkable way is suitable to Christ and merits His own approval. It does not set forth a mere ecclesiastical position, which would mark one out as a Philadelphian, but portrays for us those moral features of godliness and devoted obedience to His Word, etc., which draw out the Lord's acknowledgement and praise.

All this should exercise every believer individually that we might measure up, at least in some degree, to what characterized the Assembly at Philadelphia . We need to test ourselves by these beautiful moral features presented here, and ask, Are we such as keep Christ's word and do not deny His name, and also keep the word of His patience? We ought to strive to be Philadelphian overcomers, even in this age of Laodicean indifference and self-satisfaction. The Philadelphian Period As all of these seven Churches of Asia have their counterpart in successive stages or periods in the history of Christendom, we believe that the Philadelphian period has had its prophetic fulfilment in the revival period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Following the time of cold, lifeless formalism that seemed to settle down over all Protestant Christendom, which we have seen set forth in the Sardis condition, God began to work afresh in mighty power. There were great awakenings all over northern Europe and the British Isles . Later the same mighty power of God wrought in America . Spirit-filled men of God went about calling on sinners to repent and saints to awaken from their lethargy. Finding the churches closed to them, men like the Wesleys and George Whitefield preached in the open air to audiences of ten to twenty thousand and led thousands in England and America out of moral darkness to Christ during the eighteenth century. In the early part of the nineteenth century, the Spirit of God wrought in a special way and many believers were aroused to a deeper sense of the value and all-sufficiency of the Scriptures for their complete guidance in all phases of life. As they gathered together in many places in simplicity to study the Word of God in dependence upon the Holy Spirit to teach them, they discovered that Christ Himself is the gathering centre for His people (Matthew 18:20; Psalms 50:5), and that there is but one body of true believers in Christ. There was recovered to these earnest seekers in the power of the Holy Spirit, not only the pure gospel in its fullness, but the precious truths of the true character, heavenly calling and hope of the Church of God, of the place and work of the Holy Spirit in the Church as the true vice-regent of Christ, and of the coming of the Lord as the Bridegroom for His bride, the Church, before His public manifestation as King of kings and Lord of lords. The Holy Spirit brought to light again the blessed truths found in the epistles of the apostle Paul, which set forth the characteristic features of Christianity and of the Church of the living God. These truths had been lost sight of and unknown to the Church since the days of the apostles, but were now recovered in this mighty movement of the Spirit of God and acted upon and enjoyed by multitudes. In obedience to the Word of God, thousands left all human systems and denominations of men and began to meet in simplicity around the person of Christ alone, as members of His body only, and in dependence upon the Spirit of God to guide and minister to them through whomsoever He would. This work of the Spirit spread to many countries and to many parts of the world.

These believers were but a feeble remnant amidst the masses in Christendom, but they enjoyed the Lord's presence, power and blessing when Philadelphian features were realized and manifested. We do not claim for this movement that it alone represents Philadelphia, but that Philadelphian conditions were realized in the early days of this revival and recovery to the spiritual features of the apostolic Church. Along with the above characteristics, there was manifested an energetic missionary spirit of going forth into the world with the glorious Gospel of Christ and the blessed truths of His Church and His coming again.

Brotherly Love The Basis

We have already stated that Philadelphia means "brotherly love," and that this gives us a key to the spiritual features of this period. We believe that what is involved in the words "brotherly love" formed the basis of the fellowship that found expression among believers in the Philadelphian period and gave character to all that followed. Divine love in all its aspects is a holy love and intolerant of evil. God is love, therefore brotherly love must partake of the character of its source, which is God Himself. God is also light, therefore the love that flows from God will be characterized by obedience and separation from iniquity. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments" (1John 5:2). Thus as believers acted upon the Word of God and manifested real love toward God by obeying His commandments, they found themselves knit together in the bonds of brotherly love.

One is reminded of the words of the Lord in Matthew 12:47-50. When one came to Him and said, "Thy mother and thy brethren stand without desiring to speak with thee," His reply was, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." This is true brotherhood in Christ wherein divine brotherly love can be enjoyed. Those who are disciples of the Lord and do the will of the Father are manifested as Christ's brethren and prove themselves to be members of His body, which is the "Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven" (Ephesians 1:22-23; Hebrews 12:23). In the Philadelphian period there was a return to the true basis of fellowship according to Scripture. Believers discovered from the Bible that those who are truly saved by living faith in Christ, and manifest reality by fruit of the Spirit in their life and walk (even though in imperfection and feebleness), are members of the body of Christ and brethren in the Lord whom we are to own and love. This they saw from the Scriptures to be the divine basis and ground of practical, Christian fellowship. Membership in denominational bodies of men they saw to be unscriptural and a denial in practice of the great Biblical truth of Christians all being members of the one body of Christ. In the Thyatiran system of the evils of heathenism and the forms of Judaism combined under a cloak of Christianity; people are received who submit to its dogmas. In the State and National Churches of the Sardis condition of Protestantism, individuals were, and are, enrolled upon profession of faith in the National creeds and catechisms. Thus saved and unsaved, true Christians and mere professors, were mingled together in that which was but a dead profession. Such was the basis of the membership and communion together in these systems of men. But in Philadelphia we have a return to the Scriptural ground of fellowship in the Lord as brethren in Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit. The Presentation Of Christ

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth" (Revelation 3:7). The Lord presents Himself to this Assembly in a way that is quite different to His approach to all the other Churches of Asia. To Ephesus He comes as the One that holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; to Smyrna He speaks as "the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive"; to Pergamos He appears as "he which hath the sharp sword with two edges"; to Thyatira He speaks as "the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass" and to Sardis He presents Himself as the One "that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars." In these presentations it is what the Lord has that is pre-eminent, but in His presentation to Philadelphia it

is what He is in His own blessed Person that is foremost and outstanding "he that is holy, he that is true." What He is in Himself is ever greater and more precious than what He has.

Thus at the very outset of this tender message to Philadelphia we have the wonderful Person of Christ brought before us. We will notice that the whole message centres around Christ and shall point out ten things in connection with Himself. Here we have the first one, THE PERSON OF CHRIST, what He is intrinsically and essentially in His glorious Person. The Lord could present Himself in this intimate and personal way to the Assembly at Philadelphia because there was an appreciation of Himself in this Church and moral suitability to His holy character. In the period in the history of Christendom, which Philadelphia prophetically points to, there was a return to Christ and His Word, not just to His Word, but to Christ Himself as the centre of everything. So we find that there was a deeper appreciation and knowledge of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ during this era than perhaps since the days of the apostles. One has only to read some of the wonderful ministry which the Spirit of God gave in that period of the nineteenth century, which is preserved for us in printed form, to see therein the spirit of deep, reverent and heart-felt appreciation of the adorable Person of Christ and the wonderful revelation of Himself which the Spirit of God gave to these Philadelphian believers. We may mention here two outstanding books, written during this time, and still available today, which give a unique and exquisite presentation of the marvellous Person of Christ, and are a prominent example of how Christ revealed Himself to these separated believers. They are "The Moral Glory of Our Lord Jesus Christ" and "The Son of God" by J. G. Bellett. The highest and most important truth in Scripture is that of the Person of Jesus Christ. It is the foundation of all truth and is the highest ministry in the Word of God. Believers in the Philadelphian period valued Christ and His Word and separated from all that was contrary to His will and rallied around His blessed Person. In response to this obedience and devotion to Himself, Christ revealed to them in this special way what He is personally and intrinsically. Wonderful recompense indeed! Where is there such an appreciation of Christ as the Holy and True One today? May it be found in the heart of the writer and each reader of these lines. The Lord wants our hearts, so He presents Himself personally to stir up and draw out our affections towards His Person. This is the only way we can be made an adequate witness for Himself in a time of ruin, for when we see the Lord, and what He is personally before our souls, there is strength to serve Him with gladness and respond to His holy character. In Hosea 11:9 we read of "the Holy One in the midst of thee," and in 1 John 2:20 we are told we "have an unction from the Holy One." Mary was told "that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). In 1 John 5:20 we read of "him that is true," and "This is the true God." The Lord Jesus Christ is the embodiment in His Person of holiness and truth, but more than that, He has the moral glory of being The Holy One and The True One. These words are really divine titles of Christ and not just divine attributes. No created being can claim this essential moral glory. What a glorious Person for our heart's affections to be engaged with! But we can only appreciate and enjoy this ineffable Holy and True One when there is separation from evil and a walk in holiness and truth. A divine principle is set before us in the words of Isaiah 1:16-17, "cease to do evil; learn to do well." We cannot learn of the Lord if we continue in what we know is wrong and evil according to the Word of God and our own conscience. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you" (2 Corinthians 6:17-18). Beloved saints of God in the Philadelphian period, at great cost and pain to themselves, separated from that which they found was not according to Scriptures, because they

valued the Word of God and the Person of Christ and sought to please Him. Thus they ceased to do evil and learned more of Christ and His holiness. So every believer must do if he would know the Lord better. When walking thus, the Lord is free to reveal Himself to such obedient ones, and walking with Him we take character from Christ and are formed by Him in holiness and truth.

Christ is the True One, "the faithful and true witness" (Revelation 3:14). "Whatever He presents Himself as being or doing or saying, Godward or manward, that He is in the fullest and most genuine sense. He is the true Light, the true Bread, the true Vine, the true God, the true Witness." Thus another has well written. We can rely and fully depend on the Lord. Philadelphia depended upon Him as their only stay and support and they proved Him to be the faithful and true One. So also will everyone that trusts Him fully.

"He that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." We have seen what the Lord is, now we come to what He hath. In these two thoughts, what the Lord is and what He has, we have two wonderful themes wherewith to occupy our hearts. The hymn writer has expressed it beautifully thus:

"All Thou hast done, and all Thou art

Are now the portion of my heart." and "All that Thou hast Thou hast for me.

All my fresh springs are hid in Thee." The Lord thus goes on to present Himself as the One that has the key of David, that opens and shuts, and no man can shut what He has opened, or open what He has shut. Here we have THE POWER OF CHRIST, our second point in the series. The key of David speaks of the power of administration and of government. All things are in His hand; Christ has the key to everything. All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth (Matthew 28:18) and is at the disposal of those who depend fully upon Jesus the Lord. What an encouragement to the feeble remnant of Philadelphia is found in this presentation of the Lord, and also to all who trust fully in Him for everything in any age. The Assembly here had but a little strength, but their confidence was in the Lord and He encourages their trusting hearts by presenting Himself to them as the One who has the key of government and all administration and as the master of every situation. The Church of the Sardis period looked to secular governments and powers for protection and help, but the weak remnant of the Philadelphia era looked to the Lord for strength, help and opened doors, and He answered their faith in this cheering way. Having no human influence or support, and no human organization to promote success, the Lord alone was counted upon, and He manifests Himself to such as the One who has the key to all the treasures and can unlock each door, or close it, and act in all finality. In the key of David there is an allusion to Isaiah 22:20-24, where under the figure of Shebna and Eliakim is set forth God's rejection of man after the flesh, and His causing all the glory of the Father's house to hang upon Christ. "The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place. ... And they shall hang upon Him all the glory of his father's house." This implies administrative authority in connection with royalty in Judah in the coming day, when Christ will come in Messianic glory and be established as a nail in a sure place that will uphold all the glory and the vessels of His Father's house. He has complete sovereignty and undisputed right to enter and exercise all needful authority. He is, however, not yet exercising this power in worldly government, but having been exalted in the heavens as Lord and Christ (Acts 2:33-36), He now uses His lordship on

behalf of feeble believers who trust in Him and He removes obstacles out of their way. He is indeed "as a nail in a sure place," upon whom we can fully rely and, as it were, hang all our confidence upon.

While on the subject of Christ and the key, we would add that Christ is also the key to all the Scriptures. Perhaps we may say that He is "the key of knowledge" (Luke 11:52). Seeing Him as the theme and subject of all the Bible is the key that unlocks its treasures to us, especially the Old Testament. Believers in the Philadelphia period discovered this and the Scriptures were marvellously unfolded to them. The Commendation

I know thy works; behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (Revelation 3:8). What a comforting message of approval from the Lord for the weak, but faithful, Assembly at Philadelphia, and for the feeble remnant testimony in the prophetic period to which this Church points! He whose holy eye sees, knows and rightly evaluates everything, says, "I know thy works, I have set before thee an open door." The works of obedience to His Word and faithfulness to His Name were so pleasing and de lightful to the heart of Christ that He cleared the way for these believers to go right ahead in service and testimony for Himself. He set before them an open door that no man could shut. Though they were so weak they could not push the door open, they looked to the Lord in dependence and obedience to Him, and He gave them a wide open door that no one could close. The door was opened to Philadelphia for testimony to Christ and for all that was for His glory. The way was opened for them to separate from all that was contrary to His Word and Name and to gather in simplicity to His Name alone. The apostle Paul spoke of a great and effectual door that was opened to him at Ephesus and also of a door that was opened to him at Troas to preach Christ's gospel (1 Corinthians 16:9; 2 Corinthians 2:12). So also today, He opens doors for those who obey His Word and go forth in dependence and in devotion to His Name. An open door characterized the nineteenth century in a special way. God so ordered everything, even the governments, that the greatest liberty was granted Christians by the authorities to assemble together for worship and service. Great missionary movements took place during this time as believers realized afresh the hope of the Lord's coming for His Church and the imminence of it. Christians went forth to distant lands to preach the Gospel and "all the counsel of God," trusting in the Lord alone for support, and doors were opened to them everywhere.

Open doors for testimony and opportunities for service should not be our primary concern, however. Sometimes believers stay in places where they disobey Scriptural principles because they think they have greater opportunities for service and a wider sphere of activity there. They reason that if they separate from what they know to be wrong they will be restricted in their activities and have a narrow sphere of service. This is false and unscriptural reasoning. Our primary concern should be that our personal state and associations are such that the Lord can approve of and use us in testimony and service. When we walk in obedience to His revealed will and Word, the Lord will open doors for us to enter into and give us more opportunities for service to Himself than we will be able to avail ourselves of. God's Word instructs us, that if we separate ourselves from vessels to dishonour, we shall be "a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Timothy 2:20-21). The Lord wants clean and sanctified vessels that are separated from what is defiling and dishonourable. Such vessels are suitable for the Master's use and ready for every good work.

We may call this assurance of the Lord setting an open door before the Church of Philadelphia THE COMFORT OF CHRIST, the third point in our series. Surely it is a divine comfort to know that He gives open doors which no one can close. In the Lord's commendation of Philadelphia there are three features which He mentions that delighted His heart.

(1) "Thou hast a little strength," or "power,"

(2) "hast kept my word,"

(3) "hast not denied my name."

There was no pretension to great power or energy, as was displayed in the Church in Pentecostal days. As we think of the Philadelphian period, how becoming was this feature of a little strength when the whole professing Church was in ruin and Philadelphian believers were but a feeble remnant amidst that which was characterized by abhorrent Thyatira and Sardis conditions. To make an outward show and claim great power would be a virtual denial of the ruin and corruption of Christendom. A little power and the absence of outward display and pretentious claims is what should ever characterize Christians who seek to please the Lord in the present chaotic state of the professing Church. Those who walk in obedience and humility will be granted a measure of spiritual power, which will be manifested as it is employed for the Lord. The second feature of keeping the Lord's Word is what truly imparts strength and power to the soul. The apostle John wrote, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:14). The Word of God in the heart as a governing and controlling force in the life is what makes one a strong Christian. The Lord said, "If any one love me, he will keep my word" (John 14:23, N.Tn). Thus our love to the Lord is shown by obedience. As another has well written: "Keeping His Word means treasuring it up in the heart so that it moulds, governs, and produces obedience. The term 'word,' moreover, is very comprehensive; it includes the sum and substance of all the Lord's communications to His people. When therefore He says to Philadelphia, 'Thou hast kept my word,' He signifies that this assembly prized it as their greatest treasure, and that they were corporately, and individually governed by, and in subjection to it; and that consequently He had His rightful place of supremacy in their hearts and in their midst. Happy assembly! Would that there were more collective purpose of heart to win the same blessing and the same approval!" (Edward Dennett) In this Philadelphian era Christians became exercised about "what saith the scripture?" as to all phases of their lives, personally, and collectively as to Church order and fellowship. They desired a "Thus saith the Lord" for all that they believed and practised, and whatever did not have the sanction of the Word of God was given up as mere tradition and the teaching of man without divine authority. Thus they acted upon the Word of Christ and obeyed it, oftentimes at great cost, forfeiting social and civil distinctions and giving up positions in the professing Church and in the world. Such actions manifested how highly they regarded the Holy Scriptures and how much they valued Christ and His Word. The Lord sees all such sacrificial obedience and devotion and His deep appreciation is expressed in this warm commendation to Philadelphia, which believers in every age can find comfort in if such is their case.

Having considered the fourth point in the Lord's message, which is THE WORD OF CHRIST that Philadelphia prized and kept, we shall now notice the fifth feature, THE NAME OF CHRIST that He said they had not denied. A name is the expression of what a person is. Thus Christ's Name

expresses explicitly what He is and who He is. The Name "Christ" is the Greek form of the Hebrew "Messiah" and speaks of Him as the One anointed of God to be a three-fold Deliverer: a Prophet to bring out of error; a Priest to open the way to God; a King to govern for God. The wonderful Name of Jesus means "Jehovah is salvation." "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Thus His precious Name of Jesus Christ is a remarkable declaration of the truth of His Person, His work and His authority, and is committed to His people to hold fast and maintain in the midst of a world that has rejected Him. We are to confess and not deny His magnificent Name before men. To confess His Name means to own His absolute deity, His perfect humanity, His salvation of His people, and to acknowledge Him as our Saviour, Teacher, Lord, Advocate, High Priest and King. The believer's whole standing and walk is connected with His marvellous Name. Our sins are forgiven for His Name's sake (1 John 2:12); we are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:11); our prayers are to be presented in His Name (John 16:23); our every word and work are all to be done in His Name (Colossians 3:17); and our gathering together as Christians is to be in His Name only (Matthew 18:20; 1 Corinthians 5:4). Our Shepherd leads us in "paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Psalms 23:3), so in order to not deny His Name we must walk in holiness and righteousness. We believe the foregoing are some of the moral features which were found in Philadelphia and indicated in the Lord's words of commendation that they had not denied His Name. The inspired writer James speaks of "that worthy name by the which ye are called" (James 2:7), and Peter writes of being "reproached for the name of Christ" and of one suffering as a Christian (1 Peter 4:14; 1 Peter 4:16). The name "Christian" indicates one who belongs to Christ and is "that worthy name" by which a believer in Christ is properly called. Disciples of Christ ought to delight in that name and to refuse all other names than that blessed name of "Christian," or such names as "disciples," "brethren" and "saints" which are used by the Spirit of God in Scripture relative to all believers (Acts 9:10; Acts 9:25; Acts 11:1; Acts 11:26; Acts 11:29; Acts 16:40; Acts 20:7; Acts 28:15; Ephesians 1:1). For a Christian to call himself by any of the numerous, current names of man's sects or denominations is sectarianism and to virtually deny the precious Name of Christ as the One to whom he belongs and to whom he owes everything. The Church is the bride of Christ, and He has called her by His Name. For her to call herself by any other name would be denying His wonderful Name, just as a wife would if she took someone else's name than her husband's and called herself by it. If Christians gather to other names than the blessed Name of Jesus Christ and uphold such names, they are surely denying His matchless Name. Philadelphia owned the Name of Jesus Christ in every way; may we also do so.

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee out of the hour of trial, which is about to come upon the whole habitable world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (v.10, N.Tn). Here we have another beautiful moral feature which the Lord could commend in the Assembly of Philadelphia. They had kept the word of His patience. This brings us to the sixth point in our series, THE PATIENCE OF CHRIST.

Revelation 1:9 will give us some light on the meaning of the "word of my patience." John there speaks of himself as "your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." The Lord is the rightful king, but the only kingdom He now has is the kingdom of patience. His own people rejected Him and said, "We will not have this man to reign over us"; "Let him be crucified" (Luke 19:14; Matthew 27:22). So Christ was given the cross of rejection by the

world, but the Father raised Him from the dead and highly exalted Him in heaven. The promise to Him, as stated in prophetic language of old in Psalms 110:1, is "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool," and again, "Ask of me, and I will give thee nations for an inheritance, and for thy possession the ends of the earth" (Psalms 2:8, N.Tn). The Lord is patiently waiting for this time when the Father will put His enemies under Him and give His beloved Son His inheritance, possession, kingdom, and above all, His heavenly bride, the Church. Thus the whole of this present period of grace since the cross is the time of Christ's patience, "the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." The Church of Philadelphia entered into the thoughts of the Lord and had fellowship with Him in keeping the word of His patience. They waited with Christ in patience for His return. They did not look for a place in this world, for Christ their beloved One has no place here. Their Lord was patiently waiting the Father's time for the kingdom of power and glory on earth, so they would wait with Him in patience amidst evil and man's ambitions and exaltations. This is a blessed state of soul and pleases the Lord and merits His approval. May we as believers in this present day also know what it is to keep the word of Christ's patience. We will then be separated from this present evil world and all the ambitions of religious man and patiently wait for the coming of our Lord and Saviour to receive us unto Himself, and then to reign with Him. Saints thus characterized will not want to reign now where Christ is despised and rejected. They leave the politics of the world to those who are of it and walk as strangers and pilgrims here, waiting for the "King of kings, and Lord of lords" and His kingdom of righteousness. So Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" or "into the patience of the Christ" (2 Thessalonians 3:5, N.Tn). May the Spirit of God truly be allowed to lead our hearts into this blessedness.

We have previously spoken of the recovery during this Philadelphian period of the blessed truth of the Lord's coming for the Church before His public appearing on earth as Judge and King. This blessed hope had been lost since the Pergamos period when it was thought that the kingdom of Christ had come in the form of Constantine's empire as thousands outwardly embraced Christianity. But now the Lord by the Holy Spirit awakened His people again to the discovery of the hope of His coming to the air to rapture His blood-bought Church unto Himself and bring His bride into the Father's house (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). As in the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13, there was the sounding of the midnight cry at this time by the Holy Spirit, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." Christ's slumbering Church was awakened and lamps were trimmed and hearts of at least a remnant went out in expectation to the Lord as the coming Bridegroom. Like the early Church at Thessalonica, they waited for God's Son from heaven and had "patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:10). In a very real way there was a practical manifestation of keeping the word of Christ's patience. The Promise Of Christ As an encouragement and incentive to perseverance in the struggles and conflicts of Philadelphia in keeping the word of His patience, the Lord gives them and His Church the blessed promise of being kept out of the hour of trial which is to come upon the whole habitable world. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee out of the hour of trial." The hour of trial, which is to come upon the whole habitable world, would seem to be a period of testing and trial preliminary to the time of "great tribulation," spoken of by the Lord in Matthew 24:21, a time "such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." Besides this time of great tribulation, when the woes, misery and awful evil of man under Satan reaches its dreadful climax, there will be preliminary troubles, called by the Lord, "the

beginning of sorrows," when "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places" (Matthew 24:7-8). This time will be marked by a special energy of Satan and his evil agents, preparing the hearts of men for the great culmination of wickedness when Satan, the beast and the antichrist will be worshipped. Undoubtedly the events of Revelation 6:1-17; Revelation 7:1-17; Revelation 8:1-13; Revelation 9:1-21; Revelation 10:1-11; Revelation 11:1-19; Revelation 12:1-17 will take place during this hour of trial upon the whole habitable earth. The object of this hour of trial is stated in the Lord's words, "to try them that dwell upon the earth." Here a special class is singled out by the phrase "them that dwell upon the earth." This expression is found repeatedly in Revelation and marks out those who are morally characterized as having definitely chosen earth instead of heaven, those who have settled down on earth and have their thoughts, affections and desires confined to this present world (see Revelation 6:10; Revelation 11:10; Revelation 13:8; Revelation 14:6; Revelation 17:8). Undoubtedly this class of people have their origin in those whom the apostle Paul speaks of in Php 3:18-19 : "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." They are a religious people with a walk of the profession of Christianity, but in reality they are enemies of the cross of Christ. Having refused God's testimony in the Gospel of Christ, they mind earthly things and become earth-dwellers. The Lord will try all this empty profession of Christianity in this hour of trial, and it would appear from Revelation 14:6-7 that even the truth of God as Creator of all will be given up by apostate Christendom during this time. But the blessed promise to those that keep the word of Christ's patience and look for His coming is that they shall be kept out of this awful hour of trial and the great tribulation that shall follow. The Lord will come for His true Church before this dreadful hour begins and thus deliver them from its woes and horrors. We do not read of the true Church being on earth after Revelation 3:1-22. In the beginning of Revelation 4:1-11 a door is opened in heaven and the apostle John was told to come up hither. The rapture of the Church undoubtedly fits in here as to point of time in the Revelation, and then will follow the hour of trial and great tribulation. The Lord does not promise Philadelphia that He will keep them through this hour of trial, but that He will keep them out of it. This is the precious hope of the Church. Believing our Lord's cheering promise, we do not look to go through any or all of the hour of trial and great tribulation, but wait for His coming beforehand to take us to Himself in the Father's house. "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9). The tribulation period will be the time of His wrath poured out upon apostate Christendom. True believers are not appointed unto this, but unto the obtaining of that full salvation in Christ which shall be fully ours at His coming and deliverance from the very presence of sin in this world. We do not look for the appearance of the antichrist, but for the coming of the Christ, our Bridegroom.

"Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee" (Revelation 3:9). We were last considering verse 10 where we have one of the commendable features of Philadelphia and the Lord's promise of keeping them from the hour of trial. In Revelation 3:9 we have another of the Lord's promises to this faithful Assembly. The intimation here is that there were those who opposed these faithful believers who sought to honour the Lord and obey His Word. These opposers claimed to be Jews and were not; they took Jewish

ground in their sacerdotal orders, robes, rites, ceremonies and sacred buildings, and made an ecclesiastical pretension to a successional God-established religion. In their religious pride and pretensions, they scorned and despised the Lord's devoted Assembly, but Christ here promises that He would display to their adversaries how much He loved them. He would make them come and worship before their feet and to know that those whom they despised and maligned were the objects of the Lord's love and affections.

Thus does the Lord minister comfort to His true-hearted and afflicted people. In the coming day of manifestation and glory all will be changed. Those now despised and ridiculed for Christ will be exalted, and those who have exalted themselves in their claims and pretensions will then be debased and forced to own the true believers who honoured the Lord and His Word in the day of His rejection. The Lord will ever vindicate in His own time those whose hearts are set on pleasing Him. The reader will remember that we noted in our study of the Church of Smyrna a similar class to those whom the Lord speaks of here in connection with Philadelphia . There he spoke of "the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan" (Revelation 2:9). They are really of the same character as those before us here in Philadelphia . We have fully discussed this class of religious pretenders, based on authority derived from tradition and ordinances of man's devising, in our meditations on Smyrna and would refer the reader to the remarks there given. This system of earthly religious pretensions developed itself first in the Smyrna era of heathen persecution, and now when the Spirit of God wrought a recovery to the first principles of the Church and a return to the Word of God in the Philadelphia period, it came up again as the enemy's counterfeit, the real antagonist of the Lord's testimony. With this system Philadelphia struggled and the Lord termed it as "of the synagogue of Satan," that which is morally under Satan's power.

We may also remark that this church-party of traditional, successional order and position of pretended ecclesiastical superiority is present and active in our own day as Satan's counterfeit and antagonist of the Lord's true believers. So the encouraging words of the Saviour to Philadelphia are of comfort and value to us also.

"Behold, I Come Quickly"

After commending Philadelphia for all that pleased His heart and giving them the blessed promises we have considered, the Lord further encourages His faithful ones in their struggles and conflicts with these blessed words of His coming quickly for them. "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Revelation 3:11). He knows and sees the stress of the conflict and the difficulties of His own in keeping His Word and not denying His Name. In beholding it all, He would cheer His faithful ones on in the maintenance of the struggle by the prospect of His soon coming. It is as if one saw a person desperately hanging on to a limb over a precipice, and cried, "Hold on, I am coming!" He is coming to rescue us from all that is trying and distressing down here and to bring us to Himself in the Father's house on high. Precious hope! Here we have THE COMING OF CHRIST as the eighth feature in our series.

We have previously noted that the hope of the Lord's coming was first mentioned to the faithful remnant in Thyatira when there was no hope of recovery of the whole Church. To cold and dead Sardis, prophetic of formal Protestantism, the Lord warned that He would come upon them as a thief. Here in the message to Philadelphia there is an advance in the matter of His coming. For the

first time Christ says that He is coming " quickly ." It is a sign of how the time of His patience is coming to an end. His coming is near at hand.

It may be asked how the promise of the Lord's coming quickly can be reconciled with the delay of nearly nineteen hundred years since He spoke these words to Philadelphia ? To the Lord, who counts not time as we do, it is ever "quickly" - ever near to His affections, and He would have it to always be likewise "quickly" to the affections of His saints. To those who ask, "Where is the promise of his coming?" the apostle Peter's words give a divine answer: "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:4, 2 Peter 3:8-9). "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Hebrews 10:37).

Exhortation To Hold Fast

Connected with the promise of the Lord's coming quickly is the exhortation to "hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." We may call this THE EXHORTATION OF CHRIST, and the ninth in our series. Amidst the conflict, struggles and opposition of the adversaries, there is ever the danger of giving up and becoming weary of the battle for truth and the maintenance of what is due the Lord. The Lord could commend Philadelphia for keeping His Word, not denying His Name and keeping the word of His patience, and He had given them much light and understanding of His Person and His Word. All this must be maintained unflinchingly to the end, to His coming.

Sardis had lost much of what she had received in the days of the Reformation and was exhorted to remember how she had heard, received and to hold fast and repent. In the Philadelphian period there was the fullest recovery of all the truth of God. We believe that the Lord's words to Philadelphia, that He is coming quickly and they were to hold fast what they had, indicates that no new truth was to be revealed or recovered beyond that which the Spirit of God so fully brought to light during the era which this sixth Assembly prophetically speaks of. We should not look for new revelations and so-called "new truths" or "new light," but see that we hold fast to what has been fully revealed and act upon it. In seeking to get something "new," souls usually end up losing what they did have. Therefore the importance of holding fast what we have from God and His Word. The great danger for Philadelphians and for all believers is to lose what we have received. We know that in natural life also it is one thing to gain something and quite another matter to preserve and retain it. It is very easy to lose precious things. In the spiritual realm the same thing is true. It is one thing to have received spiritual blessings, light on the Scriptures and understanding of the truths of God. The important thing is to hold fast to the truth day by day and to have it all as living truth in our souls and as a governing power in our lives. Then we shall not lose what we have, but come into greater enjoyment of it all. We are not only to hold fast to Christ as the Saviour and to maintain the truth of the Gospel, but we need to hold tenaciously to the truths of the Assembly of Christ and maintain "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). The Lord warns us to hold fast, "that no man take thy crown." If we do not hold fast, we will lose our crown. Another has written: "The 'crown' is the distinction and glory which saints have as cherishing Christ and His thoughts of the Assembly. There is an unremitting effort to take it, and it is needful to 'hold fast.'" (CAC). From the

pen of Walter Scott we read these stirring words: "It is not the start, but the end which determines the fitness to wear the crown. A true Philadelphian is one who continues to struggle on to the end. How needful, therefore, the admonitory words to one and all, to leaders and followers alike: 'Hold fast what thou hast, that no man take thy crown.' Let go the truth and you lose the crown. What an irreparable loss!

It is important that we notice the exhortation to hold fast what we have and the warning as to losing our crown is all connected with the promise of Christ's coming quickly. It is only as we are looking for His coming as a present thing that we can hold fast and not lose our crown. In this connection JN Darby has aptly written: "If the devil could take away the hope of the Lord's coming as a present thing, this would be taking away our hope and crown. No man or devil can take away anything from us, if we have but that clear sense of faith which connects us with the coming of the Lord as a present thing. To lose this is to lose spiritual power; and anything that robs us of spiritual power in our association with Christ, is to rob us of present blessing, and of that which is the path towards our crown."

Promises To The Overcomer

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name" (Revelation 3:12). In each of the messages to the churches we have noticed cheering promises to the overcomer. God is always looking for overcomers in each changing period of the Church's history. He looks for those who will overcome the various conditions of displeasure or evil and holds out to them precious encouragements. Here we have THE REWARD OF CHRIST, the tenth feature in our series in the message to Philadelphia. It would seem that to this Assembly the Lord has given a most wonderful cluster of promises, perhaps the greatest of any given to the seven Churches. Why is this? Because I believe Philadelphia has the most to contend for. The fullest revelations were given in this period, truths about the Lord Himself, His Name, the word of His patience, the hope of His coming, etc.

Therefore the greatest encouragements and future reward are promised to those who hold fast to what they have received and overcome. But it may be said that each Church has had things which the Lord condemned, which the overcomer had to contend against and be victorious over, and that in the Assembly of Philadelphia there is nothing which the Lord censures or blames them for. What then is there for the overcomer to overcome in this Church or period? That which the true Philadelphian ever needs to overcome is the great tendency to give up the truth and thus lose what we have, as we pointed out in our last meditation. Any slackening in ardent devotion to Christ or loyalty to His Name and Word must be overcome if one would be a Philadelphian overcomer. The apostle wrote to the Hebrews that "we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip," or "slip away from them," as it may be more correctly rendered (Hebrews 2:1). To let anything slip away or to slip away from something is a gradual, gentle process and is often unnoticed. We must overcome all such tendencies to slip away from the power of the truth of God in our souls and lives and not let the precious truths of Christ's Person and Word and the bright hope of His coming quickly slip away from us. Philadelphian light without the power of the Holy Spirit will soon lead to a Laodicean

condition of luke-warmness and indifference which is very serious. As the ruin increases in the professing Church, greater effort has to be put forth to remain true to the Lord and the divine precepts. Accordingly, great and surpassing promises of reward are held out to the overcomer in Philadelphia, and of such a nature that should touch the innermost recesses of the soul and stimulate one on to renewed devotedness to Christ.

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God." A pillar suggests strength, support and steadfastness, and being in the temple of God would speak of the sanctuary where the mind of God is known and where there is worship. The overcomer is thus going to be marked out before the whole redeemed host as one that stood as a pillar for God down here, as one who was steadfast and gave support to the whole truth of Christ, His Person and His Word, held it up before men, knew the mind of God in the sanctuary and was a worshipper. He was characterized by weakness here, had a little strength, was despised by the religious world, but found his strength in God and shall be established as a pillar in the eternal sanctuary of God. In Solomon's temple there were two vast brazen pillars set up in the porch. They were named "Jachin," meaning "establish," and "Boaz," "strength" (1 Kings 7:21). There is undoubtedly an allusion to these pillars in this promise, yet also a contrast, for these pillars were removed when the temple was destroyed, but the promise to the overcomer here is "and he shall go no more out." It is a fixed and eternal position. The Church should be "the pillar and ground of the truth" of Christ and of God in the world (1 Timothy 3:15-16). Our Lord is looking for pillars who will be steadfast, strong, unmoveable and hold up the truth of what real Christianity and the true Church is. But it would seem that some Christians are looking for a pillow to have ease and comfort in their sleepy condition. Others may need a pill because they are spiritually ill. May we be true overcomers, real pillars for Christ who display in a living way to the world the truth of God.

"And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem . and I will write upon him my new name." All this denotes special approval and most intimate association with Christ. The word "My" occurs five times in this Revelation 3:12, showing how our Lord loves to connect us with Himself in these rewards. The overcomer will be made a pillar in "the temple of my God," Christ will write upon him "the name of my God," and also the "name of the city of my God," which comes out of heaven "from my God." He also promises to write upon him " my new name." We notice also that the term "my God" is spoken of three times here by the Lord. He, of course, knew His God in a most intimate way and will bring the overcomer into this intimate fellowship with Himself.

"The name of my God" is the expression of all that God is as revealed in the Son and made known to us in His Word. This is the first line of the divine writing and is primary and fundamental. The second line of writing, as it were, is "the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem." This concerns the Assembly where God's glory is displayed in the Church in her glorified state, the new Jerusalem. It is the heavenly city which faith ever looks for. This heavenly citizenship will be stamped upon the overcomer publicly. The glory of the city of God will be seen upon him in a distinctive way. All this is in contrast to man's corrupt, religious city, "that great city Babylon " (Revelation 18:1-24), which is marked by the glory of man. The third line of writing is Christ's "new name." It is not the old name of Messiah, known to the prophets and the Jews according to the flesh, but His wondrous "new name" taken in death, resurrection and heavenly glory in connection with what is entirely new and eternal, the new Jerusalem, the new creation, the new heaven and

earth. The precious name of Jesus is connected with all this and at that name every knee must bow in the universe. The overcomer will have His new name written upon him so that it can be read in him in a distinctive way.

All this precious, promised writing upon the overcomer indicates in a distinct way the Lord's heartfelt approval and appreciation of such a faithful disciple. It denotes close identification, for when we write our name upon anything we indicate thereby that we approve of it and are not ashamed to be identified with this particular thing or person. The Lord says, as it were, "I am going to put upon the faithful overcomer all that is precious to My heart; I will bring to the front and into prominence him that was shoved in the background down here and despised of men because of obedience to Me." Wonderful encouragement indeed which should energize us on in devotion to Christ and cause us to be true in heart and practice to every bit of truth we have learned, to be unmoveable in this slippery day of apostasy and man's rights which claim a broader path, and to seek the Lord's approval and not man's thoughts or applause. The Call To Hear

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 3:13). Thus closes the Lord's tender message to Philadelphia . As in all the communications to the previous Assemblies, the call is given to the individual with an exercised and hearing ear to heed what the Spirit has to say to the churches. May we have ears and hearts to hear the soul-stirring message that would call us to true Philadelphianism, to the moral features that please the Lord and delight His heart. The period in Church history which Philadelphia represents is passed and gone forever. The time when there was a broad, well marked and manifest movement of the Spirit of God in Christendom, characterized by the features of the Church at Philadelphia, and when companies of the Lord's people were practically manifest as such throughout the world and united in the bonds of brotherly love and devotion to Christ, is no longer here. That era is passed and the Laodicean period, which we shall consider in our next studies, is here.

But, as the Lord exhorted Philadelphia to hold fast that which they had until He comes (Revelation 3:11), we believe it is thus indicated there will be a remnant Philadelphian testimony of true overcomers continuing until the Lord's coming. The Lord knows every such individual who is truly Philadelphian in heart and life, who struggles on, holding fast that which he has and is an overcomer. No mere ecclesiastical position will make one such; it is a moral position and state of soul pleasing to the Lord. May every believer today heed the call of the Spirit to hear what He has to say to us and endeavour to be true Philadelphian overcomers.

We close our meditations on Philadelphia with the following quotation from W. Kelly: "I do not believe that Philadelphia is gone. I believe that Laodicea is come, but that Philadelphia is not gone, and will never go until the Lord Jesus comes; and that what He has set forth as a testimony, by revelation of His person, will never be rendered void. I do not believe that Philadelphia will go, but that the souls that fall short of attachment to Christ there revealing Himself, will go, and that grace will bring others to fill up more worthily their place. ... If the worldly-minded slip into Laodicea, God is working to bring out of it also, and into Philadelphia, just as those who become more simply set for Christ must do."

03.15. The Message To Laodicea

The Message To Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22)

Introduction

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (Revelation 3:14). Laodicea means "the people's rights" and aptly describes the seventh and last period of the history of professing Christendom, which is prophetically set forth by the characteristics of this Assembly as revealed in the Lord's message to it. It is an era of democracy, both in the world and in the professing Church. It is a time when the masses of the people are rising up and claiming their rights and power as never before.

Self-assertion and man's will is what characterizes the last days as the apostle Paul was inspired to describe them in 2 Timothy 3:1-8. This corresponds with what we find in the meaning of the name "Laodicea" and in the Lord's words to this seventh Church. There is no thought of what is due to the Lord or concern for His rights and will. The voice and will of the people is heard and followed in their clamour for "people's rights." All this is in sharpest contrast to what we found in the Philadelphian Assembly where the Lord's Person, name and word of His patience were deeply regarded and kept.

We shall find that there is the greatest indifference to Christ and His glory and comfortable self-complacency and latitudinarianism in Laodicea. This arises from despising the testimony to the Lord's Name and rejecting the light of truth recovered in the Philadelphian period. The Laodicean condition and period is the fruit of the rejection of the Philadelphian testimony. It is the last state of things in Christendom, which brings the time of Christ's patience to an end and the rejection of it all by the Lord. The Laodicean period began in the latter half of the nineteenth century and has steadily developed in our twentieth century, so that today we see a full manifestation of the real Laodicean features in Christendom about us.

Presentation Of Christ To the Assembly at Laodicea in this lukewarm, indifferent, self-sufficient attitude, the Lord presents Himself as "the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." This is what the Church should have been for God in the world. The Lord said to His disciples, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). But the Church has failed to be a true witness for God; it has been an unfaithful and false witness. This is especially seen in this last state of the professing Church as portrayed in Laodicea. The Church should also have been the "Amen," the verifier of all the promises of God, but having forgotten her heavenly calling and settled down in a scene where the Lord is rejected and relying on her own resources, she has become in this way the denial of, instead of being the Amen to, the promises of God. As united to Christ risen and glorified, who is thus the "beginning of the creation of God," the new creation, the Church ought to have displayed the power of the new creation by the Holy Spirit, for "if any one (be) in Christ,

(there is) a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17, N.Tn) Instead of this, as is fully manifested in Laodicea, the professing Church has become the expression of her own grandeur, avarice, earthly-mindedness and materialism. The Church having so greatly failed in all the above, the Lord presents Himself to the Assembly at Laodicea, which prophetically presents to us the last phase of professing Christendom, as the One who is the true Amen, the faithful and true witness, and the beginning of a new creation when all has failed of the old creation. All has been secured and verified for God in Christ, the faithful One amidst man's unfaithfulness. God will have His glory maintained; if His people fail in upholding that glory in true witness-bearing, He will Himself vindicate His own Name in His beloved Son. As God cannot leave Himself without a witness, Christ immediately presents Himself as the "Amen, the faithful and true witness," when the professing Church has failed in giving a heavenly witness. This is a great comfort to faith. The devoted and exercised child of God, distressed by the Laodicean condition of Christendom about him, can thus look to Christ for the verification of all the promises of God, for the true witness to Him and for the bringing in of the new creation that cannot be touched by man's failure. In 2 Corinthians 1:20 the apostle Paul tells us: "For all the promises of God in him (the Son of God, Jesus Christ) are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." Jesus Christ is the affirmation and confirmation of the truth of all that God has spoken; He is the fulfilment and the verifier of all the promises of God. Amen is from a Hebrew word that signifies what is fixed, true and unchangeable. Its equivalent in Greek is the translated word "verily," found duplicated so many times in John's Gospel. It implies divine certainty. In Christ we have the guarantee that every promise and every truth of God will be Amen, fully carried out. Christ is God's last word, His Amen. The book of Revelation opens with a message from the eternal God, from the seven Spirits before His throne, "and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth" (Revelation 1:4-5). A risen and glorified Man is "the faithful and true witness." His life and death here was a perfect witness of all that God is, of the grace, love and holiness of God's heart. His death witnesses the total ruin and failure of the first creation, of all pertaining to "the first man Adam," and of the setting aside in judgment of man after the flesh. Christ, the glorified Man in heaven is a witness that all blessing, joy and delight is found now in "the second man," "the Lord from heaven," "the last Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:45-57). In the Gospel of Christ He is preached as the faithful and true witness of what is in the heart and mind of God for man. All true witness, individual or assembly-wise, is presenting in testimony what Christ is. The Church should have been the continuation of Christ here in faithful and true witnessing. Having utterly failed in this, Christ abides faithful, and the ministry of Himself as the faithful and true witness brings hearts back to Him the unfailing One. This is the stay of the heart of faith and firm ground for the believer amidst the wreck and ruin of Christendom. Here faith is sustained amidst the rising tide of evil. Christ is "the beginning of the creation of God." As another has well said, "He is the starting-point of all that God has ever done or will do." He was the beginning of the first creation of Genesis 1:1-31, which has been ruined by man's sin. In Colossians 1:18 we see Christ risen and glorified as the Head and Beginning of a new creation: "And he is the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." Here He is the Beginning, the Firstborn and Head of a new order of things, a new creation, according to the power of resurrection from among the dead, into which man is brought into a new position gained by the redemption of Christ. This epistle to the Colossians was also to be read to the Church of the Laodiceans (Colossians 4:16). Had they heeded it and

realized Christ therein presented, they would not have fallen into the awful state we find this Assembly in at the time of the apostle John in Revelation 3:1-22. This is a practical word for true believers today. If we are in the good of the ministry of Christ set forth in the Colossian epistle, we will be preserved from the Laodicean state of Christendom about us. In the presentation of Christ as "the beginning of the creation of God" there is the true antidote for the disease of materialism, occupation with the things of the old creation, which so characterizes Laodicea and Christendom today. Enjoying, in the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ and the blessings that are ours in Him, the Head of the new creation, is the only way of being kept above the power of materialism that so enthral and characterizes the Church today. This is the only power of deliverance from it.

We would reiterate what we have often observed and stated in these studies of the Lord's messages to the seven Churches of Asia, that in the character of the Lord's approach to each Church, in the way He presents Himself, we have the key of the situation and the remedy for the spiritual condition and the wrong which the holy eyes of the Lord see. Thus it is important for us to notice carefully the character in which the Lord presents Himself to Laodicea, as we have done in the foregoing. Therein we find the correction for the bad state and the character of ministry suited for the needs of this Laodicean period. In this message to Laodicea we do not find the promise of Christ coming to take the Church to Himself, as in Philadelphia, "but Christ Himself taking the place of full and perfect testimony for God, and as the accomplisher of all God's promises. . In this character, Christ, as it were, supplants the Church in the manifestation of the purposes and promises of God, which cannot fail. If the Church be irrevocably gone, the witness remains, and that will be the stay of the faithful." (JND). The Lord's Censure

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:15-16). In each of the messages to these seven Churches we have the expression "I know." In our King James translation the words "I know thy works" are found in each message, but in more critical versions of the Scriptures the words "thy works" are not found in the address to Smyrna and Pergamos. Proverbs 15:3 tells us "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good," so He who is divine and omniscient can say, "I know," "I know thy works." He sees and knows everything and evaluates all according to the holy standard of the sanctuary of God.

We see in Revelation 3:17 that the Church at Laodicea had a very good opinion of itself; it was saying that it was rich, increased with goods, and had need of nothing. But the Lord who searches hearts and wants reality says, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot . thou art luke-warm." Such is the real state of the Laodicean Church, of the present condition of Christendom, which Laodicea portrays. This is its true condition as discerned by the all-seeing, all-knowing Christ.

"Neither cold nor hot" - it is not the cold of no profession of allegiance to Christ at all, nor the hot of hearts that truly love Him. The state is lukewarm; this is indifference and latitudinarianism which comes from want of heart for Christ. There is no zeal for Him, no hatred of sin, but rather an easy, self-satisfied toleration of everything, which regards all religious beliefs as alike good, provided there be sincerity. Modernism with its denial of the deity and virgin birth of Christ, etc., is characteristic of the Church today. It is not ignorance that produces luke-warmness, but the heart remaining indifferent to the truth after it has been fully brought out. Such an one does not want the

truth, because he is not willing to make the sacrifice it calls for, or separate from the present evil world. This Laodicean luke-warmness of indifferent, neutrality towards Christ and the truth of God, which is so characteristic of the professing Church of our day, is the result of the rejection of the truth and testimony to Christ which was brought forth in the preceding Philadelphian period. There is not the coldness of the dead state of the Sardis epoch. A stimulating effect was felt in the professing Church by the warmth of the revivals in the Philadelphian age. Much truth was heard and ardent devotion to Christ was witnessed. But the masses in Christendom have not had their souls touched by God's testimony to Christ and His truth recovered in the Philadelphian era. The result is lukewarm indifference to Christ with a false pretension of the truth; there is light but not that which the light should produce. There is much intelligence, but not the love of the truth, nor life in the Spirit or walking in the truth. As another has said, "The Laodicean picture is, of course, most distinct, but seems to be largely the result of dislike and contempt for the testimony that the Lord had previously raised up" (W. Kelly). This lukewarm state of indifference of heart to Christ, coupled with a boastful profession of riches, is so nauseous and repulsive to the Lord that he says to the Church of Laodicea, "I am about to spue thee out of my mouth" (N.Tn). We do not know of such a contemptuous expression used by the Lord anywhere else. It would indicate that to be luke-warm to Christ is the worst condition of all and draws forth all His indignation and utter rejection. This condition in Christendom is the last state of decay which the Lord will not let go on any further. He has resolutely declared that He will spue the Laodicean, professing Church out of His mouth, which means He will entirely reject it as His public witness, as His responsible light-bearer in the world. This has not yet taken place, for the Lord has not thus far come for the true believers, for His blood-washed Church, His bride. He will never spue one of His own out of His mouth, for He has promised, "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). The following comment by Walter Scott is helpful at this point: "It has been remarked more than once that the last four phases of the Church run on concurrently to the end. The mass in Thyatira and Sardis are involved in the doom pronounced on Laodicea, whilst the remnants in these churches equally share in one distinctive blessing of Philadelphia - 'caught up'. The Lord's coming is not referred to in the address to Laodicea . Its public repudiation as God's witness will be effected by the translation of the heavenly saints. In other words, the removal of Philadelphia and the rejection of Laodicea are coincident events, the latter being dependent on the former."

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). Thus the Lord continues in His message of censure to the Assembly at Laodicea . In the foregoing words He exposes her true state of boasting, self-satisfaction, and points out the Church's real spiritual condition of misery, poverty, blindness and nakedness. In their estimation they had need of nothing; they were satisfied with their material attainments, numbers, gifts, intellectual acquirements, influence and earthly riches and possessions. Undoubtedly they thought themselves wealthy in spiritual riches also. Learning and intellectualism in religion they prized and great pretensions to spiritual riches were made. The source of her wealth was forgotten and all was ascribed to herself. Laodicea speaks of herself and not of Christ. It is the "I" of the first man, fallen Adam, that has displaced Christ. Man is made much of and exalted in his reasonings and attainments in science, philosophy, culture and progress in civilization.

How true all this is of the professing Church to today! The foregoing characteristics of Laodicea are surely evident in the present state of Christendom. What boasting there is in intellectualism, material riches and possessions. What vast building programs and architectural beauty is displayed. The Church may be rich in the culture of its ministers with their degrees in theology and education, so that they can decide which part of Scripture is inspired and which is not, or whether any of it is. Besides the learned minister, there is the minister of Christian education, the minister of music, and the minister of pastoral services in today's modern Church. But oh! what spiritual poverty and lukewarm indifference and disloyalty to Christ is manifest. In all her possessions she has not Christ; He is outside its doors, though outwardly proclaimed within.

Laodicea says she has need of nothing. This is manifest in the lack of a prayer meeting in the busy schedule of the weekly activities of the average Church of today. Prayer is the expression of felt need and dependence upon God. Where there is no realized need, but self-satisfaction instead, there is little or no real prayer. Even amongst true regenerated Christians today the prayer meetings are poorly attended. Some are never or rarely found present in the weekly prayer meeting. Are not such saying by their actions, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing"? nothing to pray for! How easily the spirit of Laodicea creeps in amongst Christians in this day of materialism and prosperity. If we are neglecting individual, private prayer we are approaching the spirit of Laodicea also. The Lord's words to this complacent Assembly manifest its lack of discernment and spiritual blindness "knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." There was no realization whatever of their true condition in the sight of the Lord. While Laodicea was revelling in her fancied wealth and claims of superior knowledge and attainments, the Lord surveyed this Assembly with eyes that were as a flame of fire which tested and penetrated into the real character of everything. His infallible estimate of its state is that they were totally ignorant and did not possess one single thing of true riches. Their miserableness, poverty, blindness and nakedness were fully manifest to His holy eyes.

Such is the Lord's estimate of boasting and proud Christendom of our day which is so characterized by the marks of Laodicea . Though filled with self-satisfaction and glorying in man's attainments, and having no need of atonement by blood, or of being born again, the Lord sees all such as wretched, impoverished, sightless and standing before Himself in all the shame of their nakedness. Perhaps the worst feature is the insensibility and utter ignorance of the true condition before God of unregenerate, religious man as he rests in his fancied riches and spiritual attainments. Having no need of Christ and His redemptive work, there is no hope, but ultimate rejection by the Lord of Christendom's empty profession without divine life. The Lord's Counsel

"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" (Revelation 3:18). Though the state of Laodicea was so repulsive and grievous to the Lord that He was about to spue her out of His mouth, in tender grace and long-suffering mercy He offers divine counsel to this self-sufficient, lukewarm Assembly and would draw her attention to Himself as the only source of recovery and true riches. He does not as yet give them up, but graciously offers that which would fully meet their need. In the counsel of the Lord to Laodicea we observe three main needs of this Assembly, (1) their poverty, (2) their nakedness, (3) their blindness. These He tenderly offers to supply - "I counsel thee to buy of me."

"Gold tried in the fire" is a symbol of divine righteousness. Isaiah truly declared, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). For the believer in Christ the word is, "of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). So the apostle Paul desired to "be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Php 3:9). All who have this imputed righteousness of Christ are indeed rich and all who are without it and trust in their own righteousness are wretched, miserable, poor and naked as the Lord told Laodicea . How many in the professing Church of our day of the Laodicean period are without this gold of divine righteousness and thus so very poor and naked before God! Should any such read these lines, we would urge you to heed the Lord's counsel and obtain of Him by faith this divine righteousness - "gold tried in the fire." As to the Lord saying, "buy of me gold tried in the fire," etc., Isaiah 55:1 gives us the terms upon which He sells. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." If one owns his poverty as a bankrupt sinner, and comes to Christ in true soul thirst and need, he finds he can buy or obtain divine righteousness without money or price, because the great price of it was fully paid by the Saviour at Calvary .

"White raiment" sets forth the practical righteousness of believers in Christ. Revelation 19:8 tells us that the wife of the Lamb, the true Church, will be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; "for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints" (N.Tn). When one is in possession of divine righteousness by faith in Christ, there will be manifest in that one's life fruit of believing in the Saviour, by the power of the indwelling Spirit. Holiness and the moral features of Christ will be seen in the life and such will be seen clothed before men in white raiment which the Spirit of God produces in the believer consequent upon the possession of divine righteousness. The two things of divine righteousness and practical righteousness of life go together. Without divine righteousness in Christ there can be no practical, spiritual righteousness, no saintly works of white raiment. And if one has the gold of divine righteousness by inward faith in Christ, there should be seen the outward clothing of the white raiment of practical righteousness of life. Both are obtained from Christ alone. The believer is not only in Christ positionally before God, but Christ is in the believer and is to be manifest in one's life. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love" (Ephesians 3:17).

Though Laodicea thought itself rich and in need of nothing, they did not have this white raiment which alone could cover the shame of their nakedness. They were clothing themselves with works, seeking like Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness with fig leave aprons of their own making. But the Lord saw them naked and seeks to arouse their conscience as to this that they might receive from Him the white raiment they needed. What a word for Christendom today so busy with a social gospel of works for the betterment and improvement of man in the flesh, and rejecting the Gospel of salvation by the blood of Christ and regeneration by the Spirit of God! God sees all such in the shame of the nakedness of sinful man with no covering in His holy presence, just as it was with our first parents after the fall in Eden . But the eyes of the Church of Laodicea, and of religious man today, are blinded with self-conceit and cannot discern its nakedness and need of divine clothing. So the Lord speaks of the third need of having their eyes anointed with eye salve that they might see. This is the spiritual discernment which comes from the "unction from the Holy One," "the

anointing which ye have received from him" (1 John 2:20; 1 John 2:27). It is the anointing of the Holy Spirit that alone can take away the blindness of nature and give one true, spiritual sight. The vision of the Spirit of God is needed, first of all, as to one's own natural condition, and then as to God and His truth. In this Laodicean period there is boasting in the abilities of the human mind and its competency to judge things, but the need of being born again by the Spirit of God and having spiritual vision by the Spirit is ignored, so there is the blindness of nature amidst all the religious pretensions. The Lord gives this anointing of the Spirit to those who come to Him in true faith as needy sinners, poor, naked and blind.

Present Laodicea

We believe the following description of a present movement in Christendom gives a vivid picture of religious activity in this Laodicean period and shows us where it is heading for.

"The movement for a world church fostered by the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches - They desire to rephrase the old truths of the Bible, traditions of the Church, modern liberalism and neo-orthodoxy, into a new ecumenical language and restating in a new eclectic philosophical and theological apologetic for the coming great Church - rethink the Christian faith till we all have one mind in Christ, the ecumenical mind. The ecumenical double talk of today is far more treacherous than the double talk of the modernist. It is being devised for the purpose of eventually delivering Protestantism into the clutches of a new Romish hierarchy and building a Church which is not the Church of the New Testament" (John I. Paton).

Another has well written: "The giving up of 'the blessed hope' (the pre-tribulation rapture of the Church) is helping to prepare the way for the ecumenicalist's dream of one world and one church - in other words, " Babylon the Great"(PW). Such is the development of the Laodicea of our present day which will end up in Babylon the Great of Revelation 17:1-18.

Note: Since these articles on Laodicea were written and first published in 1959, much has happened in Christendom in apostasy from the true Christian faith and in developments of a great ecumenical movement. These rapidly advancing efforts for a united World Church have taken definite form and shape. Ecclesiastical machinery has been set up and the formation of "Babylon the great" of Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24 is going on under our eyes today. This we made brief reference to in 1959 under the heading PRESENT LAODICEA . Much more has developed since that time which we will endeavour to point out in future issues. (R. K. Campbell, January, 1971).

Dealings With His Own

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:19). Up to this point the Lord addressed His message to the angel of the Church in Laodicea . Now He announces a general principle of His governmental dealings with His people, that of rebuking and chastening those whom He loves, and calls upon those individual believers that may be found in this corrupt Assembly, to be zealous and repent. The Church as a whole is not called upon to repent here; He is about to spue it out of His mouth as a nauseating thing. But grace is always available to individuals, especially to His redeemed ones, to whom He ever remains faithful, however far they may have fallen into the coldness or carelessness of the religious profession around them. He ever seeks to awaken the consciences of such whom He loves, by chastening

and rebuking discipline in order to bring home to the soul how much they have grieved Him and to deliver them from the evil they are associated with, or from the lukewarm state.

It was stated in the Old Testament and also in the New, that "whom the Lord loveth he correcteth" or "chasteneth," and that we are not to despise His chastening or faint when rebuked of Him (Proverbs 3:11-12; Hebrews 12:5-6). He never afflicts willingly, but if His saints continue to remain unresponsive to the entreaties and appeals of His loving heart, He cannot allow them to go on unrebuked and without chastening. So the Lord here warns true believers as to His rod of discipline and the need to be zealous and repent, or His hand would fall in chastening dealings with them and in rebuke. The purpose of God's chastening of His children is "that we might be partakers of his holiness" (Hebrews 12:10), and that by trying and difficult circumstances and unpleasant situations of His chastening dealings with us, we might be delivered from our own wills and become yielded to God's "good, and acceptable, and perfect, will" (Romans 12:2). Chastening is not just punishment or chastisement; it is really child training, instruction and discipline, which every child of God must experience from the Father who deals with us as sons (Hebrews 12:7). In this Laodicean period of our day, one sees that this chastening and rebuking by the Lord of those who are truly His redeemed ones is much in prominence. It is His way in faithful love with His own to deliver them from the characteristic evil features of Laodiceanism which surrounds them everywhere. Many difficulties, trials and distresses are allowed to befall the Lord's people in these closing days of the Church. All of these things are part of the Lord's discipline with us as He seeks to bring us to the end of our own wills and of confidence in the flesh, whether in self or in others, that we might find rest in the will of God and heart satisfaction in Christ, the "faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." In His governmental ways with His people He would work repentance and zeal for Himself in their hearts.

We must notice that there is no note of commendation from the Lord in His message to Laodicea . Unlike all the other Churches, where there was something which the Lord could commend, there was nothing in this Assembly pleasing to Him for which He could praise it. Its state was so bad that He was outside of it all, appealing to individuals to hear His voice and open their door to Him. This action indicates a moral disowning of the professing Christian body of the Laodicean period. The Appeal To Individuals

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20). These words indicate that the Lord has taken a place outside of the Church of Laodicea, a solemn thing indeed. Its wretched moral state compelled Him to assume this position. On the other hand, it is equally true that the door of Laodicea is closed upon Christ; He is shut out and left outside. The following quotation from E. Dennett is very helpful on the verse before us: "If, however, the Lord has definitely taken His place outside of Laodicea, He has not abandoned any of His own who, failing to discern that the Lord has departed, may still be inside. Hence He says, 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.' Full of longsuffering and grace He waits upon any who may have been carried away by the seductions around them, lulled to sleep by the atmosphere in which they have been living, and with urgent appeals seeks to arouse them out of their lethargy.

"He thus stands at the door, the door closed upon Himself, and knocks, if perchance any true-hearted but slothful saint, like the bride in the Canticles (Song of Solomon 5:1-16) may

respond. Should there be even one such as may hear His voice and open the door, He says, 'I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.' The order of the possible response is to be observed. There is first hearing His voice, and then opening the door. Now, the bride heard His voice, but lacked the energy to open the door until it was too late. It is not enough therefore to hear His voice; many believers, found, alas! in evil associations, do this, but remain where they are; and so it might be with saints in Laodicea, unless indeed in His mercy the Lord lays hold of them, as the angels did Lot in Sodom, and compels them to open the door.

"The door being opened ('if any man open the door'), how rich the blessing realized. First, 'I will come in to him' - not into Laodicea ; its doom is sealed; but in to him, to him who, by grace had opened the door. And coming in He will manifest all His grace. 'I will sup with him;' that is, 'I will come down to where he is .' How wondrous His condescension! But if He first will sup with him who has opened the door, it is that He may lead him up into the higher blessedness of supping with Himself, of having fellowship with Him in His things, communion with Himself, the most exalted privilege, though intended for every saint, and the most blissful enjoyment that any can possess whether in time or in eternity; for it is the realization of our perfect association and fellowship with Christ." This is the present position of the Lord today. He has placed Himself at the door and continues knocking, appealing to individual hearts to let Him in. This He will continue to do until He comes for His bride, the true Church of redeemed ones. Then the Laodicean profession will be utterly rejected and spued out of His mouth.

Individual supping with the Lord will surely bring one into communion with what is in the heart of the Lord in regard to the Church which He loved and gave Himself for. So that such an individual will not remain individual as to the sphere of his thoughts and affections, but have his heart expanded into the breadth of the interests and affections of Christ. The Lord would bring us individually into the good of what pertains to the saints collectively and corporately as the house and family of God, as the body of Christ, as His temple. Individual faithfulness and the enjoyment of individual privilege of supping with Christ, can never lead to isolation or independency of fellow believers. It should lead one to an increased appreciation of other believers and of every link of fellowship which one can take up with brethren that is in keeping with the truth of the assembly of God and the holiness of our Lord.

Promise To The Overcomer

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Revelation 3:21). As in each message to the previous six Churches, so we find here in Laodicea the Lord looks for overcomers and gives an encouraging promise to such. Those who hear His voice in the chastenings and rebukings and repent, those who hear the Lord's knockings and open the door to Him and sup with Him will become overcomers in the power of the Spirit of God. Such will overcome the Laodicean state of lukewarm indifference to Christ and all the characteristics we have considered. The overcomer will judge the condition of Laodicea and separate from it morally. The promise to the overcomer in Laodicea is that of association with Christ in His throne in the public display of His glory in the kingdom reign. It is not as high and great a promise as that given to the overcomer in Philadelphia or in Pergamos, but it is a cheering reward for overcoming that which the Lord condemned as so repulsive to Himself. The Lord Himself is brought before us in this promise as the great Overcomer. He

overcame the Jewish world of profession, self-righteousness, unreality and enmity of religious Scribes and Pharisees. Having overcome all opposition and the world of Satan, He has been granted the blessed reward of sitting down with His Father in His throne. So he that overcomes for the Lord now will be privileged to sit with Him in His own throne when He shall reign on earth as King of kings and Lord of lords. The Call To Hear

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 3:22). As in the messages to the three previous Churches, the call to hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches closes this communication of the Lord to the Assembly at Laodicea . As the exhortation is to hear the message of the Spirit unto the Churches, not just the word to the particular Assembly at Laodicea at that time, it is evident that these messages have been recorded and preserved for the benefit of the whole Church at all times, even for ourselves today. So we do well to give heed ourselves to the message of the Spirit in this epistle, that we may be overcomers for the Lord in this evil day of luke-warmness and indifference to Himself.

Parables Of Matthew 13:1-58

We have been pointing out in this series the similarity between the seven Churches of Asia and the seven parables as to the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 13:1-58. As we did not speak of the comparison of the sixth parable of the pearl of great price to the Church at Philadelphia, when considering the message to that Assembly, we would draw attention to it at this point. The pearl of great price, which the merchant found and sold all that he had and bought it, is a type of the Church of Christ in its unity and beauty, also in the cost necessary for the Lord to have it. In the Philadelphian period the truth of the one body of Christ, the oneness and unity of the true Church was realized in a great way. The Church was seen as "one pearl of great price." The seventh parable is that of "a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world (age - N.Tn), the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just" (Matthew 13:47-49). The last stage of the great profession of the kingdom of heaven is likened by the Lord to a dragnet that gathers in the sea of every kind, good and bad. How like the Laodicean period of the professing Church where great efforts are made to attract people of "every kind" into the various denominational "nets," regardless of their being converted to Christ or not. In the parable the good fish are gathered into vessels and the bad are cast away. While this will be fulfilled at the coming of the Lord to set up His kingdom on earth and the wicked will then be cast by the angels into everlasting fire, we may make a comparison with what we have in Laodicea . When the Lord comes for His own and gathers them to heaven, He will spue the unsaved professors out of His mouth. The bad will be cast away, as in the parable, and later taken by the angels into "the furnace of fire."

03.16. Conclusion

Conclusion

We have now come to the close of our studies of the Prophetic History of Christendom as seen in the seven Churches of Asia and the messages to them from the Lord recorded for us in Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22. The condensed prophetic outline of Church history contained in these two chapters is marvellous and invaluable. As another has well said, "To have Heaven's light thrown on the state of things during the whole of this Church period of nigh two thousand years is a mercy almost second to none. What lessons are here gathered up! How needful the warnings in a day of moral relaxation! How strengthening the promises in seasons of weakness!" (Walter Scott). The message to Laodicea brings us to the close of the second division of the book of Revelation, "The things that are." This takes us to the end of the Church period. The third division is described as "the things which shall be hereafter," or "after these" (Revelation 1:19, N.Tn). This third section of the book begins with Revelation 4:1, which begins with the words, "After this." After the Church dispensation is over and the Lord has come for His true bride, all the redeemed, as is symbolized by the call to John to "Come up hither" into the open door in heaven (Revelation 4:1), the judgments from the throne of God will fall upon this earth, as chapters 6 through 19 set forth. These are "the things which shall be after these," after the close of the age of grace, the Church epoch.

We do not read of the Church on earth after Revelation 3:1-22. The redeemed saints are seen in heaven in Revelation 4:1-11 and Revelation 5:1-14, and the marriage of the Lamb to His bride, the Church, takes place in heaven in Revelation 19:1-21 (Revelation 19:7-9). A woman is seen on earth in Revelation 17:1-18, which represents a great religious system. She is called "Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." This is the final issue of Christendom when the Lord has taken every child of God out of it unto the Father's house on high. It will end up in this awful corruption of Babylon the great, which becomes "the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird" (Revelation 18:2). The judgment of God upon it is given us in Revelation 17:16-18; Revelation 18:1-24. May reader and writer be found in the good of the word to Philadelphia: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Revelation 3:11).

-R. K. C.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net