

The Faith Of Jesus

BY M. L. ANDREASEN

'Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12.

Review and Herald Publishing Association

1949

WASHINGTON, D.C.

www.CreationismOnline.com

CONTENTS

- 1.THE PROBLEM AND THE REMEDY
- 2.FOLLOWING JESUS
- 3.CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD
- 4.JESUS' LOVE OF MEN
- 5.THE BIBLE
- 6.THE LAW
- 7.SIN-AN UGLY WORD
- 8.SEVEN DEADLY SINS
- 9.CONVERSION
- 10.JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT PRAYER
- 11.THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING
- 12.CHRIST'S SECOND COMING
- 13.JESUS IS COMING AGAIN
- 14.CHRIST'S OWN PROPHECY
- 15.CHRIST AND THE PROPHET DANIEL
- 16.SOLEMN EVENTS
- 17.SOME SIGNS OF CHRIST'S COMING
- 18.THE ACTUAL COMING
- 19.CHRIST'S PARTING INSTRUCTION
- 20.MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE
- 21.SOCIAL LIFE, RECREATION, AND REST
- 22.THE NEW TESTAMENT SABBATH
- 23.SUNDAY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
- 24.PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM - 1
- 25.PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM - 2
- 26.THE ORDINANCES
- 27.THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD
- 28.THE HOLY SPIRIT
- 29.THE LAST THINGS
- 30.THE HEREAFTER

1. The Problem And The Remedy

IN A WORLD of turmoil and perplexity it becomes increasingly evident that human wisdom is not sufficient to solve the problems facing mankind. Nations are perplexed, and men's hearts are "failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." Peace no less than war has its problems, and men are still hoping for the day when in truth there will be "on earth peace, good will toward men."

Not only politically is the world in a bad way, but economically the situation is far from reassuring. From the destitute of many lands goes up a cry for bread. Strikes, strife, and commotion are everywhere. Labor is making demands that dare not be denied. Powerful lobbies are exerting pressure upon government. Capital is demanding relief as it feels its power waning. Agricultural sections are class-conscious and are making vocal their wants. Everywhere economic unrest prevails; charges and countercharges are hurled, and the tension is visibly increasing. Will the last strongholds of capitalism be overthrown? Will labor use wisely its new-found powers? Will the conflicting interests of the rural and urban populations be satisfactorily adjusted? Will conflicting sectional differences be amicably composed? Will the lion and the lamb lie down together in peace and mutual trust and understanding? It would seem that there must be a change in men's hearts before such millennial conditions can be brought about.

Social conditions leave much to be desired. Optimistic as one may be, it is patent to all that something has happened to home life. It may be possible to build and preserve a civilization and a nation without the home as we know it, but this still remains to be proved. With the passing of the old-fashioned home and its watchful discipline, with conjugal fidelity diminishing and in many cases approaching the vanishing point, with past moral standards abrogated, with parental authority laughed out of court, we are entering a new era. The burden of proof is on those who believe that moral values can survive in an unmoral world.

The figures of juvenile crime are appalling, and might well lead to serious thinking and doing. Young men turn to banditry at a disturbingly early age, and our jails and reformatories are filled with youth still in their teens. But youth are not the only offenders. Graft, corruption, and defalcations are found among young and old, rich and poor; and hardly any profession is exempt. Men, seriously concerned about conditions, ask whether there is any remedy.

The Remedy

Under circumstances such as these the church has a duty to point to a remedy for a world that has lost its way. This remedy is not to be found in education divorced from religion. That has proved itself inadequate. It is not to be found in culture or civilization. They have failed. It is not to be found in a multiplicity of laws, or even in their enforcement. They have been tried and found wanting. In fact, every remedy that men have proposed has proved a delusion and a snare. Is it not time that the gospel of Jesus Christ be given a chance? We believe that the Christianity of Christ is the only hope of mankind.

The last book of the Bible contains a statement which ideally presents the gospel and the message needed for this day and generation. "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12. Note the two conceptions: the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. Never before in the history of the world have men been in need of the gospel as now. Never before has there been such lawlessness. Might it be that Inspiration combined "the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" for this time when these two phases need special emphasis? With the prevailing, almost overwhelming lawlessness is there not need of preaching the law of God in its fullness? Have not men a right to count on the pulpit to stand for law and order, to uphold the commandments of God as the foundation of all law, and to teach and highly reverence their precepts?

In "the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" are summed up the whole duty of man. Were we to suggest a short statement as a foundation for a creed upon which all Christians could unite, we can think of nothing better. It combines law and gospel, works and faith, duty and love. It is as a banner displayed to the world, calling men and women to rally about the ensign of God. We believe that "the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" should become increasingly significant to all Christians.

The Faith of Jesus

In this volume we are particularly interested in the last part of the text quoted, "the faith of Jesus." We would lay special stress on New Testament Christianity, Christ's own Christianity. He is the master teacher. All truth is comprehended in His life and teaching. He is "the way, the truth, and the life." John 14:6.

This book is not a life of Christ. It is rather an inquiry into what Jesus believed -and taught, with the avowed purpose and intent of following Him in the faith He held and practiced.

The setting of the text just quoted is interesting. Much of the book of Revelation is thought to be hard to understand, but not so with the chapter in which we find our text. There the last events of earth's history are clearly portrayed, and the second coming of Christ is vividly described. "Behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man." Revelation 14:14.

It is in this setting that our text occurs. Before the coming of the Lord a warning message is to be sent to all the earth, telling men that the hour of God's judgment is come, and calling upon them to repent. (Verses 6, 7) The result of this message is seen in the company who "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Verse 12. This is the last church on earth, those who live just before the Lord appears in the clouds of heaven.

It is this church who have “the faith of Jesus.” They follow Him and reflect His image fully. They will be like Him, for they will see Him as He is. To them Jesus is supreme, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end, the all in all. Where He leads they follow. They go with Him all the way.

We do not know the day and the hour of Jesus' coming. We do not know the year. We are not interested in time setting. Christ Himself has warned us against this. But we are interested in His coming, and we believe that that coming is near. And when He comes we wish to be ready to meet Him.

With this objective in mind let us study the faith of Jesus, not as a matter of theology, but as a way of life. We believe such a study will bring rich reward. What did Jesus teach concerning life, death, baptism, faith, prayer, punishment, judgment, heaven, His second coming, angels, social questions, marriage, divorce, the poor, sick, underprivileged, sin, salvation, sorrow, suffering, the hereafter, and many other things? What about conversion, righteousness, sanctification, the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, the atonement? We must know what Jesus taught about these things, and what He wants us to believe and teach.

2. Following Jesus

THE numerous and conflicting sects of Christendom present a puzzling problem to the average person. Contention about minor points of faith comes sharply to the front when proposals are made looking toward a union of churches now separated by trifling differences of faith or practice. The ordinary layman is perplexed at the heat kindled over questions which to him seem unimportant and even irrelevant.

With a world task of evangelization confronting the church, it would be most desirable if Christians were united in meeting their common foe, rather than divided as at present. What might not be accomplished if Christians could throw their combined forces into the battle against evil and sink all the doctrinal differences now dividing them? We can but believe that this would be pleasing to God.

Unity of Christian Forces

A union of all true Christians is not only ideal and desirable; it is imperative. By this I do not mean that it is imperative merely in the sense that without it the church is weak, and therefore in danger of defeat. The question is larger than that. First of all, it is imperative that the world be given a demonstration that the gospel can cause Christians to live together in peace and harmony, lay aside petty differences and disputes, and show that it really changes lives and dispositions. This demonstration has never been given to the world on any adequate scale. It is due-overdue.

If a person were suddenly transported to this earth from some other planet, and were asked what he thought of the church, he might well in perplexity respond, “What church?” If the answer were given that all the Christian churches and sects were meant, he might ask again, “Do you mean to convey the idea that all these conflicting bodies constitute the church of God? Do they all claim to follow Christ?” If the answer were forthcoming, “Yes, they all claim to follow the Master, the question might properly be put, if they all claim to follow Christ, why do they not walk together?” This question constitutes a challenge to Christendom. Why do not all Christians walk together?

What a view must be opened to the intelligent heathen who for the first time contemplates Christianity and the conflicting claims of competing church bodies! How can he be anything but confused? He is taught that there is but one Lord and one faith, and he naturally expects Christians not only to agree in faith but also to love one another. He must therefore be greatly shocked and confused to find that this is far from true, that Christians act about as heathen do when things do not please them, and he wonders in just what way Christianity is superior to other religions. Christianity claims to have power to change lives; but this power is not demonstrated in all who are sent to preach it.

This confusion is intensified when the heathen considers the doctrinal teaching of Christianity. One missionary tells him that the Scriptures are inspired and are to be implicitly obeyed; another, that they are collections of myths, folklore, and fables, interspersed with good maxims and rules. One tells him that the creation story is an actual account of what took place in the beginning; another, that science has disproved conclusively the authenticity of the record. One teaches that if he wishes to be saved, he must be baptized; another affirms that this is not necessary. One tells him that he must go down into the water and be baptized by immersion; another, that the only baptism that counts is the baptism of the Spirit. He is told to observe Saturday as the Sabbath; he is told to observe Sunday; he is told that all days are alike. He is told- But it is of little use to continue telling what he is told, for there is hardly anything that he is told by one missionary that some other missionary does not deny or contradict. No wonder the heathen are confused. How can it be expected that an unlearned and primitive man can decide among so many theories which are right and which are wrong? God surely must have a simpler way by which the truth may be known.

But it is not the heathen only who is confused. The average civilized man is confused also. He does not know what to believe or whom to believe. The result is that he decides that correct doctrine is not important, and so he simply leaves religious matters alone.

God's Plan for Unity

Conditions such as these emphasize the need for Christians to present a united front, lest the weak be turned out of the way. The division of Christendom has caused the loss of many souls, and is still doing so.

We despair of any organic union of all denominations. This has many times been proposed, but so far has not succeeded. The obstacles seem insurmountable. However desirable such union may be, it is highly doubtful that it will succeed.

There is, however, a plan which individual Christians may safely accept as a basis of union, and which will effect the desired end. It is not a new one. It is not of man's planning. It is already functioning and has demonstrated that it works. It unites hearts and lives, unifies faith and doctrine, and cures the ills of Christendom. It is God's own plan for the perfecting of the saints, and is so simple that no one can fail to understand it. There is nothing complicated about it; yet it is profound and contains all that is needed for salvation.

Many years ago a young man stood face to face with the question of what he should do to be saved. He was anxious to do right, and wanted to follow the Lord, but he was perplexed by the many voices that tried to direct him. On every corner, almost, was a church. Each pointed the way to heaven, but the directions given were not the same. The young man was confused-- as confused as any heathen. But he decided that if there is a God, He would not leave to perish one who really wanted to find Him, and that if he would only pray, God would send help. In this he was not mistaken.

The answer to prayer came in the form of the statement found in John 14:6: I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me." From the heart had come the prayer: "Lord help me. I do not know which way to turn. One says I am to do this; another says I am to do that. Which way, Lord, is the right way?" Back came the answer: "I am the way." "Lord, I am anxious to know the truth, and I cannot find the truth from what men say, for they do not agree. Lord, what is truth?" And the answer came promptly: "I am the truth." "Lord, I am anxious to find, not merely light, but life. I want life, eternal life. How may I find the life that measures with Thine?" And the reply was ready: "Son, I am not merely the way and the truth; I am also the life. Follow Me. There is no other way. Only by Me can anyone come to the Father."

Like a flash from heaven came the revelation that Christ is the answer to every question of theology, as He is the answer to the deep longings of the heart. The well-known text above quoted suddenly became illuminated with light from heaven and shone with special brightness. In its light every doubt was resolved, every question answered. If Christ is the way, there is no doubt as to the way the Christian must go. Simply follow Christ. When one voice says, "Come this way," and another says, "No, come this way," there need not be any confusion as to which path to take. Follow neither, but look for the way that Christ went, and follow Him.

To those who have not settled the matter of their relation to duty, to faith and doctrine, we recommend this text for their consideration. Christ will not lead any astray. He came to this earth not only to point the way but to be the way, to give an example in His own life of what a Christian ought to do and how he ought to live. I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." John 13:15.

The example of Christ has a deep significance for the perplexed soul who is doubtful as to what he ought to do with reference to life and doctrine. Surely the God of heaven does not expect a soul to choose the only right way from among a maze of conflicting opinions without being given special help from on high. On the contrary, God will make the way so plain that the wayfaring man need not err, and will give him an anchor of the soul that will hold him, however strong the storm. Christ is the way and also the anchorage.

Some are much perplexed over questions of theology. Far be it from me to speak or think deprecatingly of theology. I believe in it; I teach it. But I also believe that all the theology that a man needs he can find in Christ and His example. When some moot question comes up all one needs to do is look to Christ for guidance. If Christ discussed the question, if He mentioned or explained it, this mention is in itself a cue to its importance. If Christ ignored it, if He did not consider it worthy of mention or explanation, it is not a matter of life and death, and may safely be left where Christ left it. Not that Christ discussed exhaustively every question that is of eternal importance. If so, all God's former revelations are needless. But if Christ definitely refrains from mentioning, or purposely ignores, a question, one will not go far astray in following His lead.

Creeds Not Basis of Unity

If two Christians of different communions should sit down together to compose their theological differences, they would probably not progress very far if they should make their respective creeds the basis of union. This has been tried before, both by individuals and by churches, and has not succeeded. If, on the other hand, these same two Christians should lay aside their creeds and agree to the proposition of

following the example and teaching of Jesus, a long step would be taken toward understanding and unity. It would also appear that if one of them should refuse to accept the premise that Jesus' life and teaching is the standard and norm for the Christian, he would by that decision place himself on ground other than Christian.

If two such Christians in their discussion should consider different points of doctrine, the question would not be, What are their respective creeds? but rather, What has Christ to say on the subject? What did He teach? What did He do? In the light of Christ's teaching and life every question would be settled; and, as stated above, if questions should arise on which Christ has not committed Himself or to which He has not made reference, they are either such as are of lesser importance or else are fully discussed elsewhere in the Bible.

That some such procedure as here outlined will actually take place in the history of the church, is clearly set forth in Scripture. The fourteenth chapter of Revelation presents a people who are perfect, who "follow the Lamb whither so ever he goes," who "are without fault before the throne of God," and who have the 'Father's name written in their foreheads." Revelation 14: 1-5. Of them it is said, "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Verse 12.

The company here mentioned not only have the patience of the saints, they not only keep the commandments, but they have "the faith of Jesus"; that is, they have the same faith that Jesus had. They not only have faith in Jesus, they not only hold Jesus as the

object of their faith, but also, as Doctors Wordsworth and Bleek translate, and as is noted in the Variorum Bible, they have “the faith taught by Jesus.”

Let these words sink deep into the consciousness of all who read this. The true church will believe in Jesus; it will have the faith of Jesus; it will have the faith taught by Jesus. This means that it will be uninfluenced by popular conceptions of religion; it means that it will be interested in one thing only: What did Jesus teach? What did Jesus say? What did Jesus do?

Following Jesus

How simple Christianity would be if all Christians would decide to follow the Master! Such a decision would unite Christendom. If I follow Christ and my neighbor follows Him, we shall walk together, not because of the decision of a church council, but because we walk with Him, because we follow Him. We who were separated have become one in Him. Neither of us had to yield to the other to establish this unity, but both had to yield to Him. And thus the middle wall of partition would be broken down, and all God's true people would be united in the faith.

As stated above, for the sake of a world lying in darkness, for the sake of souls perishing without light, God's people ought to present a united front to the common foe. We may despair of organic church unity, but we do not despair of seeing Jesus' prophecy fulfilled, that there shall “be one fold, and one shepherd,” or as the Revised Version reads, “They shall become one flock, one shepherd.” John 10: 16. We believe that this scripture will be fulfilled, and that before the end of time there will be a demonstration of what the gospel can do for humanity. The world is waiting for the appearance of the sons of God.

All God's true saints are not found in any one communion. There are true Christians in all churches. But before the end Christ's prophecy will be fulfilled, there will be “one fold, and one shepherd.” The call to union will be heard, and thousands upon thousands will heed it. From every land, from every nation, from every church, they will come, willing to stake their all upon obedience to God. They will “hear his voice,” and will follow Christ “whithersoever he goes.” They will constitute the true people of God and will have “the faith of Jesus.” It is to this call Jesus refers when He says that He has other sheep “not of this fold.” And He adds, “Them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.” John 10: 16.

Let the significance of this picture become clear to all. Christ's call sounds: “Come out of her, my people,” and out they come--hundreds, thousands, millions. How many we do not know. Christ goes before them. He leads them. They follow Him. They hear His voice. They are the other sheep, “not of this fold.” “Them also I must bring,” He says, “and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.” This is nothing less than a world movement, led by Christ, rallying all true Christians into one fold. It is a call to every true Christian to join the ranks of those who are called to “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes.” Revelation 14:4. Through them God will give the final demonstration to the world of what the gospel can accomplish in humanity. They will be subject to trial and temptation. But they will stand the test. They are

without fault even before the throne of God. (Revelation 14:5.)

That which welds these people into a unit is the “faith of Jesus.” As Christ leads them, as they follow Him, they naturally do as He did. In every phase of life He, is their pattern. Their religion consists in following their Master and learning of Him.

This, we understand, is true Christianity. And how simple and easily comprehensible it is! Let us in all humility follow the Pattern laid down for us. Let us follow Him who is “the way, the truth, and the life.”

As we shall study our great Exemplar, may it be with the sincere purpose of following Him; having in mind that a willingness to do, is the condition of knowing. May God's rich grace be with each reader.

3. Christ, The Son Of The Living God

THE deity of Christ is probably the most important question in the Bible, for on that hangs our salvation. If Christ is not God, He cannot save us; for no human being, however highly exalted, can save another. The deity of Christ lies at the foundation of all true religion. For this reason the church throughout the ages has consistently refused to acknowledge those as Christians who hold any other view of the Son of God. Christ is divine, Christ must be divine, or we are without hope.

To the deity of Christ, John bears witness when he says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John 1: 1. This Word was “made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” Verse 14.

God the Father bears witness to Christ's deity when He addresses Him as God. “Unto the Son he said, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.... And, thou, Lord, in the beginning has laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of your hands.” Hebrews 1:8-10. Here the Father addresses Christ as God and Lord, and tells us that the Son is the Creator of heaven and earth. We could have no higher testimony than this. The Father recognizes Him as God and Creator, and states that His throne shall stand forever.

There are those who wish to be classed as Christians who deny the divinity of Christ and assert that Christ Himself never made any claim to deity while on earth. This is an important question, for if Christ is not God essentially and in the highest sense, if He is not self-existent and self-existing, then we have a savior who is not God in himself, who owes his life to another, who has had a beginning and may, therefore, have an end. Thus Christ's saving work sinks into insignificance. God simply brought into existence a

being who was to die for us; or perhaps more correctly, who was to die to save God from making any personal sacrifice. But this is belittling and derogatory to God and to His character.

Christ Claims Divinity

There is no doubt that Christ claimed divinity for Himself. He knew “that he was come from God, and went to God.” John 13:3. He existed from eternity. “Now, O Father, glorify thou me with your own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” “Thou loves me before the foundation of the world.” John 17:5, 24.

Christ claimed oneness and equality with the Father. I and my Father are one.” John 10: 30. The Jews made the accusation against Christ that He “not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.” John 5:8. Again they said, 'Thou, being a man, makes thyself God.’ John 10: 33. And again, “He ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.” John 19:7.

Christ had made statements which justified the Jews in accusing Him of claiming to be divine. Perhaps the principal claim is that recorded in John 8:58: “Before Abraham was, I am.” The phrase I am” is an exclusive title of the Godhead, and denotes eternal existence. In using these words Christ claimed absolute Godhood. Lange, in his commentary, makes this comment: ---The present ‘I am’ for ‘I was,’ should also be noticed. It denotes His perpetual divine existence independent of all time. ‘He identifies Himself with Jehovah.’ “The passage most clearly teaches the essential and personal pre-existence of Christ before Abraham, in other words, before the world (17:5), and before time (1:1), which was made with the world, and implies His eternity, and consequently His deity, for God alone is eternal. This the Jews well understood, and hence they raised stones to punish the supposed blasphemer.”

Godet says, “Jesus goes still further; He says, not I was, but I am. Thereby He attributes to Himself, not a simple priority as related to Abraham, which would still be compatible with the Arian view of the Person of Christ, but existence in the absolute, eternal, Divine order.” Vincent, in his Word Studies, says: “It is important to observe the distinction between the two verbs [Was, I am]. Abraham’s life was under the conditions of time, and therefore had a temporal beginning. Hence, Abraham came into being, or was born (genesthai). Jesus’ life was from and to eternity. Hence the formula for absolute, timeless existence, I am (ego eimi).” Wordsworth’s Greek Testament says: “Before Abraham was born, I am. It would seem that the words ego eimi [I am] are used by our Lord singly (i. e. without any predicate) three times (v. 23, 24, 28) in this chapter to signify His own Divine Pre-existence,- I AM, i.e. from everlasting, and His co-existence with the Father.... Why did He not say,-before Abraham was, I was, but I am? because He uses this word, ‘I am,’ as His Father uses it; for it signifies perpetual existence, independent of all time. The Deity has no past or future, but a perpetual present, and therefore He uses the present tense, and says, I am.”

The Jews well understood the use of the I am. It was the distinguishing title claimed by God in Exodus 3:14. When Christ used it of Himself they thought it blasphemy. They knew that God is jealous of His name, and that He had said, 'My glory will I not give to another.’ Isaiah 42:8. When Jesus calmly claimed that supreme title for Himself, they were ready to stone Him.

If Jesus was not very God, if the Jews had received a false impression from His words, would He not have set them right? If He was not the I am,” if the Jews had misunderstood Him, if He was not in reality equal with God, would not His reverence for the Father compel Him to undeceive them? “But He never disclaimed the meaning which they assigned to His words. That meaning therefore is true. He did claim to be Equal and One with God - He did claim to be God. “Wordsworth’s Greek Testament.

The Desire of Ages, pages 469, 470, has this comment:

“Silence fell upon the vast assembly. The name of God, given to Moses to express the idea of the eternal presence, had been claimed as His own by this Galilean rabbi. He had announced Himself to be the self-existent One, He who had been promised to Israel, 'whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity.' Micah 5:2, margin.”

Different aspects of this claim will be considered later. For the present the case rests with the arguments cited.

Jesus in the Temple

When did the consciousness of His divinity and preexistence first come to Him? We have no direct Biblical answer to this question, but we shall not go far astray if we connect this dawning consciousness with the first visit which Jesus made to the Temple when He was about twelve years old. At this age a Jewish boy became a “son of the law,” and was expected to attend the yearly feasts.

When Jesus arrived at Jerusalem He already knew the history of the Temple. He also knew the ritual. Every boy in Israel was taught that. And yet, with what holy reverence Jesus watched the lamb as it was slain and the blood sprinkled round about upon the altar! He had read about it in the ancient scrolls. He had heard the elders speak about it. Now He witnessed it Himself. The lamb was dying before His very eyes. He remembered Isaiah’s statement of the servant of the Lord who was “brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.” Isaiah 53:7. What might all this mean?

That the whole service made a profound impression upon Him we know from the fact that when the time came to go home He was so absorbed in what He saw and heard that He did not join the company with whom His parents had departed, but stayed behind in the Temple. When they later found Him there and gently chided Him for causing them this worry, He gave this most significant answer: “How is it that you sought me? Know you not that I must be about my Father’s business?” Luke 2:49.

These words doubtless mark the opening consciousness in Jesus of His divine mission. His parents did not understand what He meant, though they heard the words. (Luke 2:50.) They were confident that there was a deeper meaning to them than appeared on the surface. Jesus was reputedly the son of Joseph, but now He mentioned someone else as His Father. Had He discovered the secret of His parentage? Did He understand that God was His Father? There seems to be no other conclusion that fits the facts. The mystery of His mission had opened up to Him. He now understood His lifework.

It was not until quite late in His ministry that Christ announced to the world that He was the Son of God. Although He did not hide the fact of His divinity, yet “charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.” Matthew 16:20.

This may at first sight seem strange. It would appear that Christ should have been anxious to have all men know that He was the Christ. Why, then, did He tell the disciples, why did He charge them, not to tell it to any man?

The reason is recorded in the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. Christ had a better way to convince men of His divinity than that of merely asserting it.

An Experiment

Jesus had selected twelve men to be with Him and to follow Him wherever He went. They were ordinary men, chosen mostly from the humble walks of life. It was His plan that they should carry on His work after Him. For this reason it was necessary for them to become acquainted with Him as well as with 11

His methods of labor. He wanted them to become so firmly settled in their faith that nothing could ever shake it. One of the chief things He wanted them to know was the fact of His deity. As stated above, no mere man can be the Savior of anyone else. That prerogative is reserved for the Sent of God. How could Christ convince the disciples of His divinity? He could, of course, tell them outright. That would be the most simple and direct way, but it might not be the best way. If, on the other hand, He should, without asserting His deity, live with them day by day, and by His life convince them that He was divine, He would establish their faith on a foundation that could not be easily shaken. This method would take longer, but it would be more effective in every way. They would be convinced, not by what He said, but by what they themselves had seen and experienced.

This, however, would not be an easy task. It is one thing to meet with a group of people occasionally; it is another thing to live with the same people from day to day. It is possible to put on a good appearance once a week; it is another thing to be under constant scrutiny twenty-four hours a day. A man may seem to be a good Christian for no other reason than that not much is known about him; but if he lives, eats, works, and sleeps with others, his inmost self will soon be revealed.

It is in the home that character is displayed. It is there that the true worth of a man is to be judged. If a man has the confidence of his own family, if they are convinced of his Christianity, others may well have confidence also. But however good a man's reputation may be, if those who are nearest to him-his wife, his children, his secretary, his servants-are not impressed with the sincerity of his life, he is not a success in the sight of God.

Christ chose the hard way to convince men of His divinity -in fact, the hardest way. He selected twelve men-ordinary, hard-working, matter-of-fact men, most of them married, took them away from their homes and families as well as from their work, and told them to follow Him. He did not provide a home for them; He did not pay them wages. They had sufficient to eat, but not much more; they simply lived from day to day, with no sure place to sleep and no assurance of ease and comfort for the future. On the contrary, He repeatedly warned them to expect persecution and hardship. “They shall put you out of the synagogues,” He said: “yea, the time comes, that whosoever kills you will think that he does God service.” John 16:2. It was not a situation to make for contentment and good feeling.

Men living under such conditions for any length of time are likely to lose their good dispositions. Everything “gets on their nerves,” irritability is common, and it takes little to bring on a crisis. The critical instinct is developed. Great tact and wisdom are needed to avoid continuous conflict.

It was under conditions such as these that Christ carried on His experiment. His plan was to live with these twelve men for a year or two, say nothing to them of His deity, and at the end of that period ascertain their reactions. He would be sure to get an honest estimate, for they were not the kind who could easily be hoodwinked, and it was of no advantage to them to tell anything but the truth. Moreover, in two years' time, living as they did from hand to mouth, they would probably be in the mood to find fault with anything with which it was possible to find fault. Their judgment would not lean to the side of mercy.

When Christ at last decided that the time had come for Him to get their estimate of Himself, He did not directly ask their opinion, but approached the subject indirectly. The record reads, “When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” Matthew 16:13.

To this they answered, - Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.” Verse 14.

He then asked the supreme question, on the answer to which would largely depend the future of His work. “But whom say you that I am?” Without hesitation “Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Verses 15, 16.

This was the only answer that could have been satisfactory to Christ. It would not be sufficient for Him merely to have impressed the disciples with the fact that He was a prophet or a great teacher. It was imperative that they be persuaded of His deity. And from watching Him day by day they had become profoundly convinced that He was no mere man but God. They had lived with Him, and they knew that His life corresponded to His preaching. After this no one could ever take away from them the assurance which was theirs because of their intimate daily contact with Him. They knew He was the Son of the living God-They had lived with Him.

The Great Confession

This statement of Peter's is called the Great Confession. And indeed it is a great confession, for it was Peter's public proclamation of his belief in the divinity of Christ that made it possible for the Master Builder to begin building His church. And with the belief in Christ's deity as the foundation stone, the gates of hell would not prevail against it.

Turning to Peter, Christ said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 16:17.

Peter had not received this conviction from any man. It was a direct revelation from God and was heaven born, and Christ calls Peter blessed. Then He gives utterance to the words which have caused much discussion: "I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock-1 will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Verse 18. We shall not detain the reader with a discussion of this text. Suffice it to say that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." I Corinthians 3: 11. Men may build churches on Peter or Paul or Apollos or any other. God builds His church on Jesus Christ, and "other foundation can no man lay."

The chief point in Christ's statement is the fact that because of Peter's confession of belief in the deity of Christ, He could now begin to build His church. He had waited two years for this confession, and now it had come. And how it must have cheered Him! He calls Peter blessed. This confession is the great confession on which the church of Christ is built. It is the center of Christianity.

"Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ." Matthew 16:20. In this remarkable injunction, most solemnly stated, Jesus puts belief in His divinity on a personal-revelation basis. This concept of His essential deity must come as a conviction to each one individually, and not as something heralded to be believed.

Christ Conscious of His Divinity

Christ was fully conscious that He was the divine Son of God. Note this episode in His life as recorded by John. Christ knew that "the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God." John 13:3. With this consciousness He rose "from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he pours water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." Verses 4, 5.

The profound contrast here portrayed should not escape our attention. Christ was the Son of God. The homage of the angels was His by right. He had been with the Father from times eternal. He was the creator and upholder of the universe, and yet He stoops to wash the disciples' feet!

A few days prior to this, Jesus had made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The people had hailed Him as a king; they had strewn their garments on the ground for Him to ride over, and the whole city had acclaimed Him as the coming deliverer. The disciples had been disappointed by the failure of Jesus to take advantage of the popular feeling in His favor, but now they were encouraged as Jesus called them together for a private gathering. They were sure that the time had come when He would proclaim Himself king and take the crown that had been offered Him.

Jesus knew what was in their minds. He knew there was strife among them as to who should be the greatest. Under these conditions He rose from supper and took-not the sword, not the scepter, not the crown-- but a towel! Wonder, O heavens! Be astonished, O earth! The King of the universe stoops to take a towel, the symbol of service and humility, and proceeds to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel.

Let it be emphasized that Jesus did this in full knowledge of His deity. He knew whence He came and whither He was going. Doubtless this act is recorded so that we might better understand His condescension and humility. He did not have what men today call an inferiority complex. He was fully aware of His royal origin. But this did not hinder Him from taking the place of a humble servant, doing for the disciples the humble and lowly service of washing their feet. He "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant." Philippians 2:7.

Christ's Foreknowledge

Jesus knew what awaited Him at the end of His career. We do not know at what precise moment the conviction came to Him that as the Lamb of God He must lay down His life. Some premonition was doubtless felt by Him the first time He visited the Temple, but it was not until the latter part of His ministry that He began to speak plainly of His future. He was already in the shadow of the cross when He began to "show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." Matthew 16:21.

It would not have been best if Jesus from the beginning had told the disciples that He was to die on Calvary. They would not have understood Him. Even as it was, they were unprepared for the news when Jesus broke it to them. But it was necessary for them to know of His approaching death; and there was no time to waste, for the event was drawing near. A short time hence they would have to meet the issue, and they must be strengthened for the test. So Jesus told them plainly of His death.

Christ not only knew that He was to die. He understood the significance of His death and what it was to accomplish. Said He, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Mark 10:45. Although there has been a great deal of discussion as to the precise meaning of "ransom," there is no doubt that Jesus considered His death as having saving significance, and that it constituted a means of saving "many." Jesus believed His death to be vicarious.

Jesus knew not only of His death but also of His resurrection. He told His disciples "that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and be killed, and after three days rise again." Mark 8:31. The

resurrection, He taught, would include not only Himself but also His followers as implied in the words: I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Matthew 26:29.

Christ had no doubt as to either His mission or His divinity. I know whence I came, and whither I go," He said. John 8:14. He knew just what He could do and what He should do. To the man sick of the palsy He brought not only healing but also assurance of sins forgiven, and took occasion to let men know that "the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." Matthew 9:6. In saying this, Jesus was in reality claiming deity and asserting His right to exercise the authority of God. When Jesus stated that He had power on earth to forgive sins, He claimed a prerogative that belongs to the Godhead only. If Christ is not God, it was blasphemy for Him to claim the power to forgive sin.

Cleansing the Temple

One of the first acts in the public ministry of Jesus was the cleansing of the Temple. As He entered the hallowed site of God's earthly dwelling place, He found money changers plying their trade within the sacred precincts, and others selling "oxen and sheep and doves." He promptly drove them all out. (John 2:13-17.) According to Matthew, this act was repeated toward the close of Jesus' ministry. (Matthew 21:12-14.) At this time He also made the charge that the Jews, by the desecration of the Temple, had made it a den of thieves rather than a house of prayer. (Verse 13.)

It cannot be supposed that a mere man would have dared to enter the Temple precincts and drive out those who bought and sold. None of the prophets had ever dared do this, though they had spoken against the Temple abuses. Nor can it be supposed that the Jews would have paid any attention to a young man who attempted to hinder the traffic of the merchants whose business was conducted under the supervision and control of the priests, unless the power of God accompanied Him. Were there not Temple police for the very purpose of keeping order? What right had this young Man to take upon Himself the burden of correcting supposed abuses? Who had authorized Him to do this? Moreover, what could one man do against so many? Yet all the traffickers fled precipitously as He "overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves." Matthew 21:12. No one runs away and leaves his money unless there is good reason for doing so. The only reason in this case was a young Man without any earthly authority. We conclude that there was a mysterious power accompanying the presence of Jesus that men dared not resist.

In Jesus we find apparently contradictory traits exhibited. He knew that He came from God and was going to God, yet He was meek and lowly of heart. He was without sin and hated sin, yet He forgave sin and loved sinners. He knew that the cross awaited Him, yet He was cheerful and urged His disciples to be the same. He was unassuming, yet He challenged the leaders of Israel. How is such a character to be appraised?

Jesus Is True God and Savior

The only explanation is that Jesus is in truth the Son of God. No other hypothesis can account for the facts of His life. And for the Christian this explanation is sufficient.

The one great question that concerns every human being is how he shall relate himself to this Son of God and Son of man. If Jesus has power on earth to forgive sins, it behooves us to learn the conditions upon which we may receive forgiveness. If all power is given unto His hands, it is important that we get in touch with that power. (Matthew 28:18.) If this power includes the imparting of eternal life, it becomes still more important that we keep close to the source of life. (John 17:2.) If all judgment has been committed to the Son, including the execution of the judgment, it is well to make friends with the judge before our case is called. (John 5:22, 27.) From whatever angle considered, it is for our good to become acquainted with both Christ and the Father, whom to know is life eternal. (John 17:3.)

Although it is not for us to differentiate between the persons of the Godhead, in some respects the Son is nearer to us than either the Father or the Holy Spirit. He became one with us. He became flesh and partook of our nature. His incarnation was not merely a temporary manifestation, for in the ages to come Jesus will still be one of us and be man as well as God. To the human mind this is incomprehensible; but even while it is beyond our power to grasp, we may, at least to some extent, appreciate its significance.

What a joy it is, and what a joy it will be in the ages to come, to know that Jesus is both God and man, and thoroughly understands everything about us. We pass through no experience to which He is a stranger. It is a wonderful comfort to know that there is One in the heavens who is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, and who when we come to Him can say, "Dear one, I understand. I have passed through trials and perplexities such as you are now experiencing. Trust Me. I have just the solution you need." Is not one of the chief intents of the incarnation that we may have a feeling of security and acquaintanceship with God which we could not have otherwise?

Jesus Belongs to Us

Jesus is the Son of God, the only begotten. From times eternal He has been one with the Father. Together they worked in creation, together they worked in redemption. They are one in purpose and mind, one in execution. Jesus Himself said, "I and my Father are one." John 10: 30.

Sin, which always causes sorrow and separation, did not leave the relationship between Father and Son untouched. If man were to be saved from the terrible results of transgression, it could be only by a revelation of the love of God which would eventually require the supreme sacrifice. And God did not hold back. Terrific as was the cost of the sacrifice, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

That cost man will never fully understand. A glimpse of the suffering that has been in the heart of God since the inception of sin, was given on Calvary. But that was only a momentary revelation. God's suffering was not confined to a few hours on the cross.

The wound was deeper than that. The cross served to give man some little understanding of what sin has cost, but it could not fully reveal the heart of the Eternal. We can only imagine the reaction in the heart of the Father when the Son cried out in agony, 'My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?' He would gladly have sent the Son assurance that He had not forsaken Him, but in that dark hour no such comforting assurance must be given. The Son must tread the wine press alone. He must die without the comforting word that would have buoyed Him up. He must feel to the full the Father's displeasure because of sin. And so no answer came back to Him in response to His heart breaking question. This broke the heart of the Son of God-and also that of the Father.

What is the meaning of this tremendous experience on Golgotha? Why did the Father and the Son subject themselves to the heart-rending anguish which must have been theirs? Again there is no other answer than that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

He "gave his only begotten Son." Some take this expression to mean that God gave His Son in the sense that the Son died for us. This is true, but He gave Him in another sense also. He gave Him to humanity, gave Him to be one with us and one of us, permitted Him to bind Himself to humanity with bonds that can never be severed. Throughout the ages to come Jesus will be the Son of man as well as the Son of God. To us this means much. To God it means more.

Christ Loved the Church

There is an ordinance recorded in the Old Testament that aptly illustrates the point we are now discussing. It is found in the chapter immediately following that which records the giving of the law of God, and is as follows: If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. And I if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: then his master shall bring him unto the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever." Exodus 21:24

A Hebrew servant could sell himself to a master, but only for a period not exceeding six years. The seventh year he was to "go out free for nothing." This was not slavery in the ordinary sense of the word, but meant that a man could hire himself out for that length of time. The law provided that if a man who thus sold himself was unmarried at the time of his entering the service, when the six years were over he could go free. But if he married during that time, "if his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself." Verse 4.

No man who loved his wife would consent to such an arrangement. If he really loved his wife, he would want her to go out with him; and if that was not possible, he would stay with her in servitude rather than leave her with the master. The law therefore further provided that "if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever." Verses 5, 6.

The lobe of the ear was bored "through with an aul," and ever after the man was to serve the master. The opening thus made in the ear was a sign of servitude, but also of love. It signified that he was a servant, but it also testified of his love for his wife, and made known the fact that it was because of this love that he was in servitude.

This ordinance might not seem very important were it not for the fact that it illustrates a certain phase of the work of Christ and of His relationship to humanity. This is recorded in the fortieth psalm. Christ is here quoted as saying: "Sacrifice and offering thou did not desire; mine ears has thou opened: Christ, the Son of the Living God burnt offering and sin offerings has thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: Yea, thy law is within my heart." Verses 6-8.

The statement, 'Mine ears has thou opened,' connects these verses with the old ordinance in Exodus 21, for the word here used for "opened" has the same meaning as that used in Exodus for "bore through." The margin of the Authorized Version has "digged"; the American Revised has "ears has Thou digged (or, pierced) for Me." Only in the light of the Mosaic ordinance can the full meaning of this be appreciated.

Christ came to this world "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Mark 10:45. He came to serve. He came alone, and of the people there was none with Him. When He had finished His work, He could have gone out alone, had He so wished. But He did not want to go out alone. "Father," He said, I will that they also, whom thou has given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou has given me: for thou loved me before the foundation of the world." John 17:24. Christ had fallen in love with humanity. He did not want to be separated from His own. He wanted them to share the glory which was to be His. He had already promised the disciples, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also." John 14:3.

Christ could have stepped down from the cross. He could have returned to heaven and left us to perish. But He did not wish to go out alone; He desired to have us with Him. He wanted to cast His lot with us. As the servant of old, He loved His own. Under these circumstances there was but one law. He could stay with His wife only as His ears were pierced- And so Christ unhesitatingly stepped up to the tree, not to have His ears bored through, but His very heart, His hands, His feet. Those marks He will bear forever, the marks of His humiliation-but far more, the marks of undying love, of glory, of victory.

The Figure of Marriage

The picture of Christ's union with humanity under the figure of marriage is consistently carried through in the Bible. 'I am married unto you,' says God. Jeremiah 3:14. For this reason unfaithfulness to God is considered spiritual adultery. (Romans 7:3.)

Having been married to “the old man,” we are now “married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. Romans 7:4. “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.” Ephesians 5:31, 32.

As a young man prepares a home for his beloved, so Christ has gone to prepare a place for His own. When it is ready He will come again to receive them unto Himself. (John 14:3.) The marriage will then take place. “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 righteousness of saints.” Revelation 19:7,8. The Lamb's wife, the New Jerusalem, is the “holy Jerusalem,” which descends out of heaven from God. (Revelation 21:9,10.) “Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” Revelation 19:9.

Which tie is the closer, that which binds a son to his father, or that which binds a man to his wife? We believe the latter. Originally God said, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” Genesis 2:24. Paul, quoting this in Ephesians 5:32, applies it to Christ, saying, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

Christ's love for His church has not made His love for the Father any less intense. Rather the opposite is true, if that were possible. Christ loves the Father more, and the Father loves the Son more—we speak after the manner of men because of their common love for man. Yet it is true that Christ's love for His church impels Him to be with them.

Christ, the Son of the Living God. The earth is given to the children of men, and as Christ has become one of us, He chooses to live with us and be one of us. Thus He will, in a certain sense, leave His Father and cleave to His wife, of which Paul speaks. Thus it comes to pass that Christ will be with us, take up His abode on the earth made new, and in a real sense become Immanuel, God with us. (Matthew 1:23.)

God the Father

That a definite change takes place in the universe because of Christ's love for the church is clear from the Scriptures. When at last the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, comes “down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband,” a great voice is heard “out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” Revelation 21:2-4.

God's dwelling place is in heaven. “The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.” Isaiah 66: 1. Since times eternal God has made heaven the place of His abode, and His throne is there. But now a change takes place. When the New Jerusalem comes down from God out of heaven, “the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.” Revelation 21:3. God's throne is moved to this earth, and this not for a brief time only. The statement is made that the “tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.” Revelation 21:3. “They shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.” Revelation 22:4, 5.

We can draw no other conclusion from these statements than this: that when Christ comes to live with us the Father comes also. The imagination may be unable to conceive of this, but it will be a certain reality. “Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ - what may these promises not denote! Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children. Christ prayed that we “all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou has sent me.” John 17: 2 1. His glory shall be ours, and we shall be one, even as the Father and the Son are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou has sent me, and has loved them, as thou has loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou has given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou has given me: for thou loved me before the foundation of the world.” John 17:23, 24.

Of the glory that shall come to the saints of God, seers and apostles have spoken; but all descriptions fall short of the reality. Eye has not seen, mind has not perceived, the imagination is unable to picture, that which God has prepared for them that love Him. Utterly unworthy, we cry out: ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.’ Revelation 5: 12, 13.

Christ's Conception of Himself

When we therefore raise the question of Christ's conception of Himself and His work, whether He considered Himself divine, very God, we can only answer that Christ knew Himself to be God, that He was come from God and went to God. He knew further that He had come into the world to seek and save that which was lost, and that He would accomplish this task, though at great cost to Himself. He claimed absolute power over life and death, to quicken whom He would. (John 5:2 1.) He is the judge in the last day, the Father having committed all judgment to Him. (Verse 22.) He “hath power on earth to forgive sins.” Matthew 9:6 He is the great ‘I am,’ the eternal, self-existing God. (John 8:58.) He is the Creator, and the Father Himself addresses Him as God and Lord. (Hebrews 1:8-10.) He claims absolute equality with God, and states that “all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.” John 5:23. These words leave no choice. Christ is either God or the greatest blasphemer conceivable. The Jews thought Him a blasphemer. The Christian believes and accepts Him as God and Savior. Blessed be His name forever.

4. Jesus' Love Of Men

IT WAS love that caused Jesus to leave the courts above and come to this world to save men. Of the Father it is said that He “so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.” John 3:16. The same love that caused the Father to give His Son, caused the Son to give Himself. “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” Ephesians 5:25. Paul makes it personal when he says that Jesus loved me, and gave himself for me.” Galatians 2:20. The apostles John and Paul confidently affirm that Jesus Himself loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,” and “gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world.” Rev:1:5; Galatians1:4. It was not duty that motivated Jesus in coming to this world. He came because He loved us.

Jesus' love of men was not confined to a single race or to a special few. His love embraced all, black and white, rich and poor, men and women, good and bad. Not because men were good did He love them and give Himself for them. No; “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8. The little child, the stern soldier, the outcast leper, the despised publican, the venerable Nicodemus, the sinful woman, the rich Zacchaeus, the possessed demoniac, the bereaved widow-all elicited His sympathies, and all shared in His ministrations. He made no distinction between those of His own nation and strangers from afar. He drew no racial lines.

Jesus had a profound appreciation of the value of the human soul. He was as willing to minister to those whom men considered outcasts as He was to minister to the more favored and rich. A leper received as much attention as did a member of the Sanhedrin. He took as much time to help the flippant woman at the well as He did to help the rich young ruler. No one was beneath His notice. He was ready and willing to help all.

The Demoniac

Who but Christ, for instance, would have thought it worth while to spend time on the demented man “who had his dwelling among the tombs”? “No man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.” Mark 5:3-5.

A man in this condition is as far removed from humanity as it is possible for a man to be and still be counted a human being. He was possessed of an unclean spirit-which meant that he was bodily and morally corrupt-so possessed that no man could tame him; he had been bound with chains, but with superhuman strength he had plucked them asunder. Day and night he was in the tombs, crying and cutting himself. Such a man better be left alone. He was beyond help.

But Jesus did not think so. The tombs in which the man lived were on the other side of the lake from where Jesus was, but Jesus gave command to cross over. A storm came up on the way, and it seemed that all would perish; but Jesus quietly rose “and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.” Mark 4:39. In the morning He arrived in the country of the Gadarenes, where the poor demoniac lived.

As far as the record goes, all that Jesus accomplished on this trip was the healing of this man. He must have known this before He started, but this knowledge did not deter Him from doing all He could to save him. As a result Jesus passed a hard night with little sleep, encountered a storm that might have proved fatal but for His intervention, and left the shores again at the invitation of the people He had come to help. The disciples doubtless felt that this particular missionary tour did not produce results commensurate with the efforts put forth. Jesus would have done better to stay on His side of the lake. There was only one man helped, and he seemed of very little worth.

Under these conditions we feel warranted in believing that Jesus crossed the lake to demonstrate the fact that no man, however low in the scale of humanity, is to be passed by, and that there are potentialities and possibilities in the least promising individual that must not be overlooked. As is known, later events showed that this particular visit held great eventual results.

In connection with the healing of this man possessed of devils, an interesting incident took place. When Jesus asked, “What is thy name?” the spirit replied, “My name is Legion: for we are many.” Mark 5:9. As Jesus was about to drive out the evil spirits, they besought Him much that they be not sent out of the country, but into a herd of swine that was feeding near by. Jesus permitted them to enter the swine, who promptly “ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed With the devil, and also concerning the swine. And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.” Mark 5:13-17.

We do not know why Jesus permitted the devils to enter into the swine. True, they asked to be allowed to do this, but that does not seem sufficient reason. Some think that Jesus permitted this as a rebuke to the Jews, who considered swine unclean and yet were willing to raise them for profit. It is true that one who considers swine unclean and yet raises them for profit is not consistent. There are some other worthwhile facts apparent in this narrative.

The Worth of a Man

Two thousand swine represent a considerable financial investment. I do not know what two thousand swine are worth now; I do not know what they were worth then. I shall not attempt an evaluation, as it is not necessary for our purpose. Suffice it to say that thousands of dollars' worth of property was destroyed to save a poor human wreck whom men thought not worth saving, and who was probably responsible for his own condition. When the keepers of the swine fled into the city and told what had happened to the man “that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine, . . . they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.” Mark 5:16, 17.

No doubt the Gadarenes were glad that the demoniac was healed and in his right mind. He had been a source of great trouble to them. No one dared pass that way, and his shrieks at night sent terror to even the most stouthearted. He was now restored, a wonderful miracle had been performed, and the people were glad. But those swine! A man had been saved, but at what cost! Was any man worth two thousand swine? The more the people thought of it, the surer they were that they did not want any more people saved at such a price. So they "began to pray him to depart out of their coasts." And He departed.

Is a man worth two thousand swine? Jesus thought so. He thought him worth more than that. On one occasion He said, 'What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' Mark 8:36. The world is worth more than two thousand swine. And a man is worth more than the whole world. This is the estimate that Jesus puts on the human soul.

In the days of Christ a man's life counted little. Slaves were sold cheap in the market. Hosea bought Gomer for fifteen pieces of silver and some grain. (Hosea 3:2.) Twice that was the ordinary price of a slave. But a man such as the demoniac had no value at all. He was a liability. Yet Christ considered him worth saving. And He wanted to impress upon all the Gadarenes, the disciples, and all who later should read the account—that even the lowest of men is worth saving and that no cost is too great where a soul is at stake.

We may think that the Gadarenes were unmindful of the great privilege of having Jesus as their guest, and that they should not have weighed the cost of saving this man against the loss they sustained in the swine. We may even think that we would have done differently, and would not have asked Jesus to depart. This question is debatable. There are people today who by their acts say clearly that they do not consider the soul of a man worth much. At least they are not willing to invest much in one.

Christ could not have chosen a better illustration of the worth of a man than the one He selected. If that man was worth saving, if that man was worthy of the effort Christ put forth to reach him, then there is no man now living on the earth who is not worth saving. He may be degraded, he may be possessed of ten thousand devils, but he still bears, if only in a small degree, the image of the divine, and the gospel is able to save him and restore in him the image of God. Wonderful is the worth of man, and still more wonderful is the Savior of men!

Not only in the days of Christ was life cheap. It is cheap now. A human life—how easily it is snuffed out! Tens of thousands are killed every year by automobiles, other thousands are killed in accidents, other thousands are murdered, and the list constantly increases. Yes, human life is cheap; and nations are asked to increase their population for no other reason than that more soldiers may be provided. What shall the end of these things be?

May it not be well to consider the worth of a soul in the light of Christ's evaluation? How can we selfishly enjoy ease and comfort, when souls for whom Christ died are suffering for want of the bare necessities of life, not to mention their spiritual needs? Have we forgotten that we are all brothers, that we have a responsibility to even the least of these? Have we forgotten that Christ died to save men, and that this glad news has been entrusted to us that we may publish it to all the world?

The Sinful Woman

Christ took special pleasure in selecting "hard" cases in demonstrating the power of the gospel. A case in point is the woman who was taken in adultery. There was no question of her guilt. She had been taken in the act. Stoning was the penalty. That was the law. 'What says thou?' Jesus was asked. Jesus knew the hearts and also the lives of her accusers. He knew that they were more guilty than she. He answered nothing, but began to write in the sand. We are not told what He wrote; but as the men pressed about Him to see what He was writing, one after the other withdrew, till at last Christ and the woman were alone. We may surmise that Christ, who knew their hearts, had written something that involved them; at least, after they had seen what He had written, they were not anxious to press the case against the woman. They departed.

"Where are those your accusers?" Jesus asked. "Hath no man condemned thee?" "No man, Lord," she answered. "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." (John 8:1-11.) Jesus had saved a soul—perhaps one not worth saving according to the estimation of some people. If this woman were living today, we would not admit her to church membership, and if she were a member of the church, we would disfellowship her; but Jesus saw something of worth in her, and so she was saved for the kingdom.

As we consider these two cases of the demoniac and the sinful woman, we are in no doubt as to the wisdom of Jesus' course. Note the results that followed.

The Results

The demoniac who was healed wanted to go with Jesus, but was told to go back home and to his friends, and tell them what great things God had done for him. "He went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him. And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him." Luke 8:39, 40. This abundantly justified Jesus' confidence in the man, and it also proves the wisdom of not passing by anyone as unfit for the kingdom. When Jesus later returned to the place from which He had been asked to depart, "the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him." They had forgotten all about the swine and what the healing had cost. They themselves had found the Savior, and were waiting for Him. The demoniac had done good work.'

It was the same with the woman taken in sin. We find her later appearing unbidden at a feast held for Jesus at the house of Simon the leper. "A woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." Luke 7:37, 38. Simon was not pleased with this, and

thought in his heart, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touched him: for she is a sinner." Verse 39.

Jesus read his heart and said to him: "There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou has rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, See thou this woman? I entered into your house, thou gave me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gave me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou did not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgives sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Luke 7:41-50.

It is generally agreed that this is the same event which is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, in which a feast is held at the house of Simon the leper and a woman anoints the Savior with precious ointment contained in an alabaster box. In Matthew this statement is added, "Where so ever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." Matthew 26:13.

Not to very many people has God erected a memorial. But to this woman God erected one to last as long as the world, "for she loved much."

Christ made no mistake when He chose these two cases as examples of what the gospel can do in humanity. Both were outcasts: the one a man, the other a woman. There did not seem to be much hope for either. If we had been there, we might seriously have questioned the advisability of expending much effort on them. But Jesus had no doubt about the possibilities. He saw in them candidates for heaven, such as would be to His glory.

As stated before, Jesus took special pleasure in helping those who were helpless and whose cases looked unpromising. There were times when He failed to get the results that might be expected, as in the case of the ten which He healed, only one of whom returned to give God the glory. But in most cases He achieved unusual results. In any event the lesson is clear: we are not to pass by any as hopeless.

The Common People

Someone has said that Christ discovered the common man. This is true in the sense just exemplified. He saw in men what no one else saw, and He had the ability to get men to cooperate with Him. Out of the most unlikely material He would form a vessel into honor. In the kingdom of God we expect to see, very near the throne of God, some of those whom men discarded.

Who but Christ would ever have conceived the idea of selecting twelve men without wealth, position, education, or influence, to constitute the nucleus of a worldwide organization that would shortly overturn empires and give history a new direction? If the twelve mightiest rulers in the world had been selected, they could have done no more than was done by these unknown men. Christ passed by the high and the mighty, the rich and the influential, and chose men of a despised race to accomplish His work. What a mighty demonstration of the worth of the common man! The world for centuries and millenniums before Christ had believed in the divine right of some men to rule, and in the destiny of others to be ruled. For centuries after Christ the same idea prevailed. It is only in the last century or two that the common man has come into his own. That all men are created free and equal, and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, is a doctrine that even now does not find universal favor. Yet it was upon this principle that Christ worked and upon which He founded His church. Men have not yet caught up with Christ in His conception of the worth of the common man.

Christ at the Well

Perhaps the most illuminating story of Christ's attitude toward the common people and His appreciation of the worth of a soul, is recorded in the fourth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. It is that of Christ and the woman at the well.

She was a flippant, bantering, light-headed woman, who had had five husbands, and who was living with a sixth man to whom she was not married. Every element seemed to be lacking in her character to make her good material for the kingdom, and so Christ-passed her by? No, Christ never passed anyone by. He engaged her in conversation. The case was not bettered any by the fact that Christ was a Jew and she was a Samaritan. No Jew ever passed through Samaria if he could avoid it, and there were those who, under no circumstances, would tread on Samaritan soil. Furthermore, no true Jew would accept a drink from a Samaritan, nor would he drink from a vessel made in Samaria. To do so would be defiling. All vessels to be usable must be made of good Jewish clay, not of defiled Samaritan soil.

The day was hot, Jesus was weary, the disciples were away in the city, and it was noon. As the woman approached the well Christ asked her for a drink. At this she was astonished and taken off her guard. How could He, a Jew, ask her, a Samaritan, for a drink? Jesus immediately took advantage of the situation and turned the conversation into spiritual channels. She, however, was not interested in this. Then Christ said, "Go, call thy husband." Knowing that Christ was a stranger and could not possibly know anything of her private affairs, she answered lightly that she had no husband, thinking in this way to end all questionings along that line.

To her astonishment, Jesus said that she had answered rightly, for she had had five husbands, and the one with whom she was now living was not her husband. This was an unexpected answer, but she quickly recovered herself and, to avoid further conversation along this unwelcome subject, started an old theological controversy as to where men should worship-in Jerusalem, or in

Samaria. Christ refused to be drawn into such a debate and told her that the time would come when men would worship neither in Jerusalem nor in Samaria, but would worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.

The woman began to sober down. Here was a person whom she could not “handle”; He knew her life and would not be drawn away from His evident intentions. Soberly she said, I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus said unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.” John 4:25, 26.

At this critical moment the disciples arrived and were astonished to find Jesus talking with a woman. They knew that something unusual was taking place, so “no man said, What seeks thou? or, Why talks thou with her?” Verse 27. “The woman then left her water pot, and went her way into the city, and said to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.” Verses 28-30.

The deep impression that Christ left upon the woman is suggested by the fact that though she had come to draw water, she left her water pot. Jesus apparently did not get the drink for which He asked.

As none of the disciples were present when Jesus talked with the woman, it is reasonable to suppose that Jesus told the story to John or one of the other disciples. This makes it the more interesting. Jesus wanted the record preserved.

The story reveals a mature psychological approach on the part of Jesus. From this angle alone it is worthy of study. The greater wonder, however, is that Jesus would take time to talk with a Samaritan woman, and especially one of this type. We cannot escape the conclusion that Jesus considered no one beneath His notice. It seems that He had set Himself the task of demonstrating that common people, fishermen, publicans, sinners, and women such as this one have possibilities for good in them, for leadership, for responsibility. If this was one of His objects, He succeeded admirably.

Because of the woman's report “many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his own word: and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.” John 4:39-42.

The Rich and the Noble

There is no record that Jesus ever sought an interview with the high priest, or with any of the government officials or Pharisees or scribes. With some of these He talked, but not at length, unless it be the interview with Nicodemus, which was at Nicodemus' request. Christ did not seek these men; He did not call them in the sense in which He called the twelve. He chose common men, and with and through them demonstrated the worth of the common man. But this does not mean that Jesus loved the poor because they were poor and despised the rich because they were rich. No, Jesus loved all men, poor and rich, and He was as willing to spend time and effort on the rich as on the poor. Whoever needed help He was willing to help.

The parable of the rich man, recorded in Luke 12:16-21, whose ground brought forth plentifully, is not a parable against rich men as such, or even against riches, but against the wrong use of wealth. The God of heaven had given the rich man a bountiful harvest. It was not the acquisition but the use of wealth that was the issue.

The parable about the rich man and Lazarus also concerns not wealth but the use of wealth. (Luke 16:19-31.) The rich man had fared sumptuously while the poor man had received the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. The rich man felt-as many rich men feel - that what he had was his own, that he was not a steward but the owner.

This was the difficulty. God has given men power to get wealth. They are not to consider that because of their talent to get wealth they are better than others. Christ teaches that men are not owners of what they possess, but only stewards. If anyone thinks that because of his riches he will be given special consideration in the world to come, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus should completely disabuse his mind of such an idea.

There are other parables that deal with the rich and the noble, but none of these condemn the rich as such. The lesson, however, is clear that there is a deceitfulness about riches that should be recognized. Christ spoke of this very plainly.

In the parable of the sower and the seed some of the seed fell among thorns. “He ... that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.” Matthew 13:22. We note here that there is “deceitfulness” in riches and also that there is danger that the rich may become “unfruitful.” Both these aspects need to be guarded against.

The rich can buy favors with their money. In many respects they have their own way, and deference is paid them that is not given to a poor man. Because of their riches they do things which the common man cannot do; they often times pay their way out of a difficulty, whereas the poor man goes to jail. They have the best of everything, and are in danger of considering themselves both privileged and superior.

This may be a definite handicap. The rich do not generally become inured to hardships. They consider themselves above the ordinary rules of life. And when they come face to face with realities they are often at a disadvantage. This superior attitude toward life carries over in their minds to the life to come. Here on earth they have always been favored. Why should they not be favored by God? He has favored them here by giving them riches, and He will surely continue to favor them.

This is a fatal deception. Jesus tried to disabuse their minds of such ideas. He spoke parables to the rich not because He hated them but because He loved them and wanted them to be saved, and because He knew that there was little hope for them until they got a sane view of themselves and of their responsibilities. He wanted them to know that riches are not an advantage but a responsibility, an opportunity. He wanted them to know that there are definite dangers connected with the acquisition and possession of riches, and

also that there are compensating advantages if they rightly use their privileges, and consider themselves stewards and not owners. The parables teach that no special favors will be granted them because of their riches, nor will they be discriminated against. This is fair.

The Rich Young Ruler

That Jesus did not dislike men because they had possessions is clear from a little incident recorded in the Gospel according to St. Mark. A rich young ruler came to Jesus and inquired what he should do to inherit eternal life. (Mark 10: 17.) Jesus told him to keep the commandments. The young man said that he had done that from his youth. "Then Jesus beholding him loved him." Here was a young man of promise in whom Jesus saw possibilities for good. His only handicap was his riches. They were a hindrance to him rather than a help, as long as he trusted in them and clung to them. If he could be divorced from his riches, if he could be taught that they were only entrusted to him, as a steward, to use, not for himself, but for others, Jesus could use him. On this would hang his future and his usefulness to the kingdom. "Go thy way," Jesus told the young man, "sell whatsoever thou has, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions." Mark 10:21, 22.

Jesus loved rich and poor alike, regardless of their riches or their poverty. He was as quick to rebuke the poor for their covetousness as He was the rich. Said Christ, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." Luke 16: 10. The only hope of the poor was to be faithful in the small things. If they were not faithful in these matters, they would never be given the privilege of having greater things. "Because thou has been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." Luke 19:17. Again Christ says, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Matthew 25:21.

God wants the poor to be faithful in their little as He wants the rich to be faithful in their much. He is not favoring the rich, nor is He prejudiced against them. He loves them. He understands their peculiar temptations, and wishes to be of assistance to them. But He does not want them to be deceived in thinking that they are especially favored because of their possessions.

There are doubtless rich people who enjoy being fawned upon, and who accept homage as their due. But there are also rich people who detest all pretense, and would like to be treated as ordinary human beings. An official who had rather suddenly been elevated to high position-and deservedly gave vent to his inmost feelings when he said: "I am sick and tired of all the attention I am getting. I cannot turn around without being waited on. All my life I have dressed myself, but now I am not even permitted to do that. There is always somebody ready to do me service that I would much rather do myself. I wish there were some way of getting back to normal again, and be a man among men." We are persuaded that there are many others who see the hollowness and pretense of undue deference, and wish they might be "a man among men."

The Pharisees

If there were one class of people that Jesus would have difficulty in loving, it would be the Pharisees. They did all in their power to hinder Him in His work. Not only did they refuse to enter the kingdom themselves, but they kept others from entering it. They were bigoted, self-righteous, proud, vindictive, cruel. They were always dogging His footsteps, making life hard for Him. They were the ones who stirred up the people against Him and plotted His death.

We shall not attempt to prove that Jesus loved the Pharisees in the same way that He loved John or the other disciples. We do not think that He did, or that Christianity demands that we love all alike. There were some whom Jesus loved more than others, in whose homes He felt welcome, and where He loved to go. Christianity does not exclude special friendship, nor does it demand that we be equally intimate with all; but it does demand that all be treated with justice and consideration, and that a deep and genuine interest be shown in the welfare of all.

With the determined and consistent hatred of the Pharisees for Jesus, it is interesting to note that Jesus ate with them, and received and accepted at least three invitations to be their guest, one of which was from one of the chief Pharisees. (Luke 7:36; 11: 37; 14: L) Nor must the long talk He had with Nicodemus be forgotten, for Nicodemus was "of the Pharisees," "a ruler of the Jews," apparently one of the leaders. (John 3: 1.) In this case, as well as when Jesus talked with the woman at the well, there were no others present at the interview. As in the case of the Samaritan woman, we presume that Jesus told the story to John because He wanted the interview recorded.

Jesus was not prejudiced against the Pharisees as such. He would do anything to help anyone who desired help, and He was willing to stay up nights to do so. It should not be forgotten that it was in connection with His interview with Nicodemus that some of the most precious statements in the whole Bible are recorded. Although we cannot be certain that John 3:16, "God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son," was a part of this interview, it may likely have been. But even if this statement was not part of the interview, we still have all the beautiful truths concerning conversion and the work of the Spirit recorded in the first verses of the third chapter of John as a definite contribution of Christ first given to a Pharisee.

In Christ's whole life we fail to find pretense or hypocrisy of any kind. He was kind to all, honest, fearless. He did not favor the rich; neither did He cater to them. He did not despise the poor; neither did He give them the idea that because they were poor, therefore they were good. He counseled the rich not to take advantage of their position or to believe that they would receive special consideration; He counseled the poor not to be envious or bitter, but to be faithful in little matters, and greater opportunities would be theirs.

The kind of Savior Jesus is, is the kind of Savior we need. The kind of man He was, is the kind of men we ought to be. He went about doing good, faithfully doing the work given Him to do. We should do the same.

5. The Bible

CHRIST had the highest respect for the Scriptures, and quoted them constantly. Hear Him speak, "Have you not read what David did?" Matthew 12:3. "Have you not read in the law?" Verse 5. "Have you not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female?" Matthew 19:4. "Have you never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou has perfected praise?" Matthew 21: 16. "Have you not read that which was spoken unto you by God?" Matthew 22:31. "Have you not read this scripture?" Mark 12: 10. "Have you not read in the book of Moses?" Mark 12:26. "Have you not read so much as this?" Luke 6:3. It must have been discomfiting at times to have Jesus ask these questions of such as should have read and who should have known better. We do not believe, however, that He asked questions merely for the sake of embarrassing people. He had a deeper and nobler purpose. He wanted to call men's attention to the Word and to their need of studying it. He wanted them to search the Scriptures, which testified of Him. (John 5:39.)

Jesus had a deep and profound knowledge of the Word. This He revealed on many occasions. After the resurrection some of the disciples were on the way home to Emmaus from Jerusalem, talking of the things that had occurred the last few days, when Jesus joined them. They did not know Him, and concluded that He must be a stranger, for He seemed unfamiliar with the happenings that were engaging the attention of all. Jesus asked some questions to draw them out, and then began to instruct them. "O fools," He said, "and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. -Luke 24:25-27.

Jesus began with "Moses and all the prophets" and explained to the two disciples the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. He had no Bible with Him. As the Scriptures of His day were large scrolls that could not easily be carried on a journey, He evidently quoted from memory. Yet He was acquainted with Moses and all the prophets and could quote from them. He knew His Bible; He knew the prophetic Scriptures, and He used them.

When Jesus later met with the other disciples He "said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." Verses 44, 45. Having thus instructed them, He emphasized His words by saying, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." Verse 46.

"Thus it is written." Jesus knew what He was saying and what He was quoting. He did not say, "I believe it says so," or, "I think this is the wording," but, "Thus it is written"; not something like it, but thus. He quoted Scripture correctly. He knew His Bible.

Jesus not only knew the Word and quoted it but lived according to it and taught others to do the same. With Him, believing and doing, faith and works, were closely associated. In perplexity He asked, 'Why call you me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?' Luke 6:46. Then He laid down the principle: 'Not everyone that said unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven.' Matthew 7:21.

Faith in the Old Testament

Jesus held that faith in the Old Testament was requisite to faith in His word, that faith in Moses was requisite to faith in Him. Note His words: "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuses you, even Moses, in whom you trust. For had you believed Moses, you would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?" John 5:45-47. Christ definitely raised the question as to how any can reject Moses and yet claim to believe in Christ. The inference is that it cannot be done. Nor is it possible to accept Moses and reject Christ. The two go together, according to Christ's statement.

Words are thoughts made audible. God's words are His thoughts made audible. Thoughts reveal the man, for "as he thinks in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 23:7. The Bible is the Word of God; hence it is a revelation of God, His thoughts made audible. The first revelations of God in the Old Testament are couched in language suitable to the people to whom they were addressed, but they are, nevertheless, as inspired as the later ones. Some make a distinction here which Christ did not make. They claim that the earlier revelations do not show the grasp and the maturity that the later ones do. They also make a distinction between parts of the Old Testament, considering some vital and others inferior.

There is no doubt that there is a certain progression in the Bible, and that a gradual unfolding is in evidence. It should be particularly noted, however, that this progression is not because of any deficiency of the teacher, but because of the limitation of the pupil. There must of necessity be "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." Mark 4:28. Good teaching requires this.

As in school, so in religion, there are those who would join the upper classes before having mastered the fundamentals. Such need to go back to the Old Testament, where the fundamentals may be learned. They will not progress as they should unless and until they do. As an understanding of calculus requires preparatory fundamental courses in mathematics, so the Old Testament is needed for a sound religious foundation and comprehension.

Christ and the Scriptures

The Scriptures were always on the lips of Jesus. Again and again He said, "It is written," and referred to some definite statement supporting His claim. To Him, when a thing was written it was of authority.

Near the beginning of His ministry Christ was led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." Matthew 4:1. Forty days He fasted and "was afterward an hungered." Verse 2. Satan then appeared to Him to tempt Him. if thou be the Son of God" Satan said, "command that these stones be made bread." Verse 3. To this Jesus answered, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" Verse 4.

When Satan in the second temptation attempted to quote Scripture, Jesus again met him with the words: It is written again, Thou shall not tempt the Lord thy God." Verse 7.

The third time Satan came, and once more Jesus met him. "It is written, Thou shall worship the Lord thy God, and him only shall thou serve." Verse 10.

This incident shows the use which Jesus made of Scripture when He was assailed by temptation. He could have used His own words. He could have vanquished Satan by an exhibition of His power. But He chose to use the Word. He fortified His own position with quotations from the Bible. He doubtless had in mind such as would be placed in similar positions, and He gave them an example of how Satan might be vanquished by the very weakest of the saints. He showed them the more excellent way.

Throughout His ministry Jesus lost no opportunity to call the attention of the people to the Word. Whenever He was asked a question that could be answered in the words of the Scripture, He so answered it. Note this little story. "Behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? How reads thou? And he answering said, Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou has answered right: this do, and thou shall live." Luke 10:25-28.

Christ could have answered the question about eternal life without using Scripture, but He chose to call attention to the Word of God. He might have enhanced His own reputation had He chosen to take another path, but His interest was in the Word. To that He referred every questioner whenever it was possible.

At one time Jesus had a dispute with the Jews in regard to His relationship to His Father. In the course of the conversation He appealed to Scripture, saying, "Is it not written in your law, I said, You are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say you of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" John 10:34-36.

"The scripture cannot be broken."

The word here translated "broken," means "to unloose or undo." The sense is that the Scripture cannot be unloosed, undone, or made void. The Cambridge Bible observes that it means that Scripture - cannot be explained away, made to mean nothing; or, 'cannot be deprived of its binding authority.---Godet remarks that the expression "shows the unlimited respect which Jesus feels for the word of Scripture.

"The scripture cannot be broken." The unity of the Scripture is here denoted by the singular, Scripture, rather than by the plural form. The Scripture cannot be broken, cannot be made void, cannot be done away with; it abides. To Christ the Scripture was a unity, and unbreakable.

The subject under discussion when Christ made this statement makes the words still more impressive. Christ had claimed to be the Son of God, one with the Father. (John 10: 30, 36.) To this the Jews had objected violently, thinking He was blaspheming. They even took up stones to kill Him. In support of His contention Christ asked, "Is it not written in your law, I said, You are gods?" Verse 34. It was this statement, "You are gods," which Jesus defended when He said that "the scripture cannot be broken."

A statement of this kind should doubtless not be stressed too much, for it is only in an accommodated sense that the children of God can be called gods. Yet Christ quoted these words from Psalms 82:6, and affirmed that even such a statement cannot be broken. We can draw no other conclusion from this than that Christ accepted the whole Scripture, that which is easily understandable and that which is harder of comprehension, as the pure, unadulterated word of God, Which cannot be broken.

Of the same nature is the statement in Matthew 5:18, 19: Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

The Jews considered some of the commandments greater than others, some as being of great import, others as being not so vital. Christ takes "one of these least commandments" as His text, and says that whoever shall attempt to change as much as "one jot or one tittle" shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. This tells us that Christ wishes us to be careful of even the least commandments." They are all of God, and we are not to count any of them as of little importance.

Three Revelations

There are three distinct revelations of God: in nature, in the Word, and in Christ. The distinction between the revelation of God in the Word and the revelation of God in Christ is that Christ came to this earth and lived among men, and thus revealed to men what God is like. The written word is the recording of that life, with the necessary preliminary history and prophecy and a consequent explanation. The one is the life; the other is the recording of life. The life, being fuller than the recording of it, constitutes the complete revelation of God. "In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Colossians 2:9.

Christ the Word

Christ is called the Word, for the reason that He expresses God and reveals Him. Men needed a revelation of God, and God sent His Son to give this. As the Word is God's thought made audible, so Christ is God's thought made visible. John could therefore say of Christ: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." I John 1: 1-3.

"The Word was made flesh." John 1: 14. Christ became incarnate and lived among men. Men saw Him and "beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth." Verse 14. It is the same Word that was in the beginning with God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God- The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men." John 1: 1-4.

Christ is here presented as the Creator, the One through whom all things were made. "Without him was not any thing made that was made." The things that were made revealed their Creator and do so still, though in many respects the image is blurred. But Christ, as the revealed Word of God, remains the same. The revelation in His life, and the recording of that life in the Bible, are the highest revelations we have of God. They are complete and sufficient.

The Old Testament

Christ is revealed in all the scriptures, in the Old Testament as well as in the New. He says of Moses, "He wrote of me." John 5:46. Note further: "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." Luke 24:27. These scriptures include not only Moses but "all the prophets" and "all the scriptures." We therefore believe that Moses and all the prophets and all the scriptures speak of Christ. For this reason we can reject any part of the Bible only at the risk of great loss. Christ makes the point still more emphatic when He says, "These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." Luke 24:44. By the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms Christ evidently meant the whole of the Old Testament. That makes the case complete. Christ endorses the Old Testament. He encourages us to search it. In it, He says, we shall find Christ.

The New Testament

The only Bible in existence in the time of Christ was the Old Testament. It is, therefore, of the Old Testament that Christ speaks when He mentions the Scripture. What about the New Testament? What shall be our relation to it?

We do not suppose that there can be any question about this among Christians. Whoever loves Jesus must of necessity be interested in everything that concerns Him. The four Gospels are a record of what Christ did and taught, and of the effect this had upon him that heard Him. Following these four Gospels is a record of what the disciples did after His departure, and how the work progressed. This is called the book of Acts. Then follow twenty-one letters and epistles written by those who had a prominent part in the spread of the gospel, chief of these writers being Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. The Bible closes with the sublime revelation vouchsafed John on the Isle of Patmos, giving in exalted language a picture of the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." Revelation 1: 19.

These twenty-seven books comprise the New Testament, and constitute a code of morality so high and so perfect that none higher can be conceived. Here is a record of the matchless life of Christ, lived among an unappreciative people who at last hanged Him on a tree. But He could not be held of death. He rose again to die no more. He lives ever to make intercession for His people. He is now at the right hand of God, whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. Then sin shall be no more, neither shall pain or sorrow or death. Glorious hope! Glorious prospect! How can any fail to be thrilled by such good news? Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, is the prayer and hope of the church.

True Protestantism

There was a time when the Word of God was not so widely circulated or read as it is now. It was then not safe for any to be seen reading the Bible. Ignorance and bigotry ruled supreme, and persecution was rampant. Had not relief come to the people of God, truth would have perished from the earth. But God had resources at His command, and when the time came He called for them, and men arose who, in the providence of God, turned the tide.

Chief among these men was Martin Luther. He was a man mighty in the Scriptures. Unafraid, he stood nearly alone against the learning and power of the enemy. When challenged for his faith, he took his stand uncompromisingly on the Word of God. Placing his hand upon the Bible, he said, "Here I stand, I can do no other; may God help me."

On that declaration modern Protestantism was founded. "Here," on the Bible, I stand." On that foundation Protestantism has stood for more than four hundred years. Discarding human tradition, taking its stand on a "Thus said the Lord," Protestantism has prospered under the guiding hand of God. The world owes much to the intrepid leaders of those early days, leaders who counted suffering and danger as of little account against the privileges of being a co-worker with God. Many were the threats leveled against them, but through it all God protected His own, and Protestantism flourished.

A New Peril

We are today facing a new peril. Not from the Roman Catholic Church, not from heathen philosophies, but from among Protestants themselves men have arisen speaking perverse things. We are threatened with a danger, greater than could possibly come from any outside source. We have reference to the persistent and organized effort to make of none effect the Word of God, and to reduce the Bible to a collection of pious phrases, childish fables, and ancient myths.

The Bible is the foundation upon which Protestantism has been built. Can the foundation be undermined, honeycombed, devoured by termites, and the superstructure remain standing? The Bible, and the Bible only, is the watchword no longer among many so-called Protestants. The structure which the fathers reared is still beautiful and even massive in appearance. But something is destroying the foundations. An enemy is boring from within.

Does God have no message for a time like this? We cannot believe that God will forsake His own. If ever a Luther was needed, he is needed now. "Back to the Bible," the old Protestant rallying call, needs to be sounded again. And when it is sounded clearly, men will hear. There are still seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed their knees to Baal. There are still men who will stand stiffly for the truth once delivered to the saints. God's people will be willing in the day of His power. That day is near.

Higher Criticism

The teaching of the higher critics does not harmonize with the teaching of Christ. The two are far apart. If we are following in the footsteps of Jesus, there can be no question where we stand, where we ought to stand, or where we are going. His constant answer was, "It is written."

If some of the higher critics had been present when Christ said this, they would have objected. They would have objected to His quotations, and to the source of the quotations. They would have informed Him that He should not refer to the Pentateuch as the work of Moses, for Moses had nothing to do with it. They would have informed Him that it would be better to refrain from mentioning Jonah and the whale, for every informed man knows that the event recorded never occurred. They would have suggested that reference to creation be omitted, for it is now well known that there never was any creation. As for the fall, how could there be one, if the theory of evolution is true?

We can imagine Christ standing by quietly, wondering how men ever became so wise above what is written. We can imagine Him quoting from Job, as men would declaim learnedly about what did or did not take place during the first week of time: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou has understanding." "Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? or because the number of thy days is great?" Job 38:4,21. We can imagine some of the critics shrinking to their right proportions at these questions; but we can also imagine others remarking that Job is not to be relied on as a source, and that the quotations are without point.

A Real Crisis

In view of such conditions what is our duty? There can be no question as to that. If we wish to follow the Master, we must not falter or retreat. The way may be hard, but duty is clear. There were never greater opportunities than now. We must be faithful to the task given us. We must be true Protestants indeed, believers in the Bible as the inspired word of God.

There is no doubt that Protestantism is facing a real crisis, the greatest in its history. The issue is the Bible. Shall we retain our faith in the good old Book, or shall we follow the lead of those who are dissecting it and destroying the faith of thousands and millions? There is no way of avoiding the issue. Protestantism's right to existence is based on its belief in the Bible as the inspired word of God above all human tradition. If this main pillar of its faith crumbles, the structure must collapse. No building can remain standing after the foundation is removed. The critics are removing the foundation.

The issue is serious. The very life of the church is at stake. O that God would send another Martin Luther to lead His people back to the old paths! Protestantism must not fail. There is yet a mighty work to be done. Shall we not gather warmth from the coldness of others, zeal from their lethargy, loyalty from their treason? Shall we not rally to the support of the good old Book, which has stood the test of the ages, and which is now being crucified in the house of its friends? God has men and resources in store which He will bring forth at the crucial time to confound the great and the mighty. Let us gird for the battle.

Is the Bible the Word of God?

As we are especially concerned with what Jesus believed and taught, there is no doubt that the Bible is the Word of God. We cannot believe in Jesus and reject the Scriptures. These, as we have learned, include the Old Testament as well as the New. Christ's words, quoted above, are much to the point: "Had you believed Moses, you would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?" John 5:46, 47.

"If you believe not his writings," that is, Moses' writings. We are sincerely concerned as to how any Christian can read these words, and yet reject the writings of Moses. Yet some do this. To such the next words apply: "How shall you believe my words?" This means that the Bible is a unit, that we cannot accept one part and reject another. This is Christ's teaching on the inspiration of Scripture, and this is the true Protestant view.

“How shall you believe my words?” It seemed inconsistent to Christ that any should claim to believe in Him while rejecting the Scriptures. “Had you believed Moses, you would have believed me,” He said, “for he wrote of me.” Therefore, when we reject Moses we are in danger of rejecting Christ.

But if we may not reject the Old Testament, we may certainly not reject the New. Not only do the writers there speak of Christ, but Christ Himself speaks. And to reject His words is to reject Him. Of this no Christian can be guilty.

We therefore accept the whole Bible as the inspired word of God. We do that because of the internal evidence in the Word itself; we do that because of the inner conviction in our heart given us by the grace of God; we do that above all because of Christ's belief and teaching on the subject. Here we stand. We can do no other. And let all who in humility follow the Master say amen.

6. The Law

CHRIST was never ' neutral or negative. Those who heard Him knew what He said, and also what He meant. The reason for this was that He meant what He said, and said what He meant. He was straightforward and clear-cut, positive and dynamic. People always knew where He stood.

He did not attempt to gain popular favor by flattery or by lowering standards. Sin was sin to Him, and He called it by that name. He was unafraid. It might be the haughty Pharisees, whose favor was curried by all. It might be the rich Sadducces, who had great political influence. It might be the crafty Herodians, whose ill will might make His work hard. He never counted the cost in terms of what men might say of Him or do to Him. He had a work to do, and without respect of person He did His work, leaving the results with God, who had sent Him.

The Jews were great sticklers for the law. With much exactitude they held to the multitudinous ceremonies and ordinances of the Jewish ritual. The Pharisees were particularly observant of the letter of the law, and were most intolerant of such as did not or could not measure up to their standard. The leaders had added many ordinances to the original commands, and it was a life study to know what was required. It was impossible for the common people to have this exact and comprehensive knowledge. As a consequence, the Pharisees held that the people who know not the law are cursed.” John 7:49.

For these reasons the attitude of Jesus toward the law was of great interest to the Jews, and especially to the Pharisees. As a teacher it was incumbent upon Him to make His position known, to tell the people plainly where He stood. In this He did not disappoint them. One of His first sermons dealt with the law. More than a thousand years before Christ the law had been proclaimed from Mount Sinai, and had been written by God on two tables of stone. (Exodus 20; 24:12; 31:18.) This law of Ten Commandments had then been placed in the ark beneath the mercy seat, in the most holy place in the sanctuary. (Exodus 25:16, 2 L) There it remained as long as the tabernacle stood. Later it was transferred to the Temple of Solomon, where it remained until the destruction of the Temple, about six hundred years before Christ. After that it was lost sight of. Tradition tells us that Jeremiah hid the ark just before the destruction of the temple of Nebuchadnezzar. There was no law or ark in Herod's Temple at the time of Christ.

The law of God has always been held in high reverence by the people of God throughout the ages. The psalmist expresses this sentiment well when he says, I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.... Thy testimonies are wonderful.” Psalm 119:127-129. I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad. O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments has made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.” Verses 96-99.

The Two Laws

Besides the Ten Commandments there was another law, sometimes called the ceremonial law. This law was also commanded by God, but as it was proclaimed by Moses and written in a book by him, it is also called the law of Moses. However, it is well to differentiate between the ceremonial law and the law of Moses. The ceremonial law deals only with ceremonies. The law of Moses is more comprehensive, and contains much valuable instruction.

The law of God, the Ten Commandments, deals with the great principles of man's relationship to God and to man. There are ten clear, crisp commands, “Thou shall,” and “Thou shall not.” They are applicable to all men under all conditions. The commandment, “Thou shall not steal,” for example, applies to the cultured man of the world as well as to the unlettered savage, to the rich businessman as well as to the thrifty housewife. The ten-commandment law is universal, and applies to all men everywhere.

This is not so of the ceremonial law. It is of an entirely different kind, and deals with local Jewish ceremonies, with meats and drinks, and with divers washings for purification. It tells what to do in case one accidentally touches a dead person; it tells what kind of animal to bring as a burnt sacrifice; it tells how to observe the Day of Atonement or any other of the Jewish feasts; it tells what to do in case a house is infected with leprosy. As will readily be seen, these matters had no value after the Jewish economy came to an end, and therefore ceased when the Temple service ceased. This law dealing with specific Jewish problems and ceremonies was intended to last until the Messiah should come, when it would automatically end.

The Law of God	The Ceremonial Law
Is called the "royal law." James 2:8	Is called "the law...contained in ordinances."
Was spoken by God. Deuteronomy 4:12,13	Was spoken by Moses. Leviticus 1:1, 2.
Was written by God on tables of stone. Exodus 24:12.	Was "the handwriting of ordinances." Colossians 2:14
Was written "with the finger of God." Exodus 31:18.	Was written by Moses in a book 2 Chronicles 35:12
Was placed in the ark. Exodus 40:20;1 Kings 8:9; Hebrews 9:4.	Was placed in the side of the ark. Deuteronomy 31:24-26.
Is "perfect." Psalm 19:7.	"Made nothing perfect." Hebrews 7:19.
Is to "stand fast for ever and ever" Psalm 111:7, 8.	Was nailed to the cross. Colossians 2:14.
Was not destroyed by Christ. Matthew 5:17.	Was abolished by Christ. Ephesians 2:15.
Was to be magnified by Christ. Isaiah 42:21.	Was taken out of the way by Christ. Colossians 2:14.
Gives knowledge of sin. Rom3:20; 7:7.	Was instituted as a consequence of sin. Leviticus 3-7.

It need hardly be emphasized that the ten-commandment law is eternal and unchangeable; whereas the law of Moses was a temporary and imperfect instrument, useful for the time being, but destined to be abolished at the death of Christ.

The Jews were zealous for the law of Jehovah. They were proud of the fact that to them had been committed the oracles of God. They considered themselves guardians of the law, and whoever did not regard it highly was anathema.

However, they regarded the ceremonial law nearly as highly as they did the law of God, and in some respects even higher. heathen nations, they argued, ought to keep the law of God; but the ceremonial law was their own peculiar possession. They only had a temple; they only had a sacrificial service to which the law applied. The ceremonial law was for the Jews alone, adapted to their peculiar conditions, a special gift of God. Moreover, it was a protection to the law of God, a kind of hedge about it, without which the law of God would be exposed to the vicissitudes of chance. Hence, the ceremonial law constituted a kind of first defense, which must be maintained at all hazards.

To this law the Jews during their long history had added many precepts not originally given either by God or by Moses. These additions had acquired the same status as the original Mosaic ordinances, and were by the common people considered a part of the law handed down by Moses. Some of the restrictions in the law as thus revised were most intolerable and even unjust, and constituted a yoke that was hard to bear. The people groaned under the burden; yet in a certain sense they were proud to be the recipients of so much attention.

The attitude of Jesus toward these conditions can well be imagined. He would tear away and destroy all the petty ordinances which had been added by men. He would present and restore, even magnify, the law of God, and cause men to observe it. As for the ceremonial law, He would teach men its true meaning, show them its temporary nature, and prepare them for its eventual abolishment. In this He would be careful and cautious, lest some should get the impression that He was doing away with all law. In fact, He would be so careful lest He be misunderstood, that He would rather leave the status of the ceremonial law undetermined while He presented the principles on which it was based. These principles, when understood, would of themselves discover the temporary and provisional nature of all the ceremonial ordinances. Then, when the people and His disciples saw Him in His true nature as the Messiah, the Lamb of God, the Temple service would naturally lose its meaning for them.

As for the law of God, there was no question in His mind as to His duty. Law is so important in religion and in a nation that no one can afford to put himself on the side of lawlessness. Christ would take His stand definitely for the law, enforce its precepts, and magnify it in the minds of men. This would be so much easier for Him, as the law was His Father's law, as well as His own, and its principles as enduring as eternity itself.

It does not surprise us, therefore, to find Jesus taking His position strongly for the law in His sermon on the mount recorded in the fifth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. Hear these heartening words: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:17-19.

Jesus and the Law

In some respects the Jews considered Jesus a revolutionary. He did not show the respect for their teachers and learned men that they thought He should. Though He frequently went to the Temple, He did not appear very enthusiastic; in fact, He had done the unprecedented by driving out the buyers and sellers who plied their business in the court, declaring that such had no place in the house of God. He was apparently a radical who would bear watching. His first important sermon, therefore, was listened to with deep interest. What would be His view of the law?

They were not long left in doubt. Jesus took His stand squarely on the Ten Commandments, saying that not one jot or one tittle of the law should pass till all should be fulfilled. Whoever should break even the least of the commandments and teach men so, should be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever should do and teach them should be called great. All could understand these clear and plain statements. Jesus upheld the law. He stood stiffly for it. It is incumbent upon every teacher of religion to declare himself on the law. Men have a right to know whether the religion he teaches has a background of law and order, or whether

it is one of these irresponsible movements that demand privileges but shun responsibilities. Especially in these days when law is called in question should the position of every religious teacher be made clear. Christ defined His position at the outset of His career. Every minister should do the same.

Interpretation of Law

Law is capable of a narrow as well as a liberal interpretation. It may be interpreted according to the letter or according to the spirit. An example of the former happened in an institution some years ago. A young man had been asked to sweep the halls, which he proceeded to do. After a while the overseer noticed that although the halls had been swept, the sweepings had been deposited in a corner. The young man was called to account.

“Did I not ask you to sweep the halls? Why have you not done so?” “I have done so.” “Now can you say that you have done so when all the sweepings are here in the corner?” “Well, you did not tell me to pick them up. I have swept the hall.”

Technically the young man might be said to be correct. Practically he was not. He failed to grasp the spirit of the command.

Another case that is illustrative of the same attitude took place not long ago. A young man was brought before a council and was charged with immorality. The case was well known, and the young man did not dispute the facts; yet he pleaded that he was not guilty as charged. On being questioned, he admitted the facts as known. It developed that he was willing to admit fornication but not adultery. Technically he was correct; in reality he was wrong.

It was this same attitude which many of the Jews, and especially the Pharisees, took in the time of Christ. They held to the letter of the law and forgot its spirit. For this, Christ took them severely to task. There were those among the Pharisees who in order not to transgress the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill,” habitually carried a broom with them with which to sweep their path, lest haply they step on some insect and kill it. Others would blindfold themselves, lest they look on something and covet it. Their whole outlook on law and life was perverted, and they made existence miserable for themselves and for others. Their religion was unattractive.

In the same sermon on the mount from which we have taken the statements concerning the law, Christ discussed the attitude we have here mentioned. “You have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembered that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with your adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou has paid the uttermost farthing.

“You have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced commits adultery.” Matthew 5:21-32.

Christ here takes two commandments, those concerned with killing and adultery, and shows their spiritual application. It is not enough to keep the commandment outwardly. God looks at the heart. In effect Christ says: “The law is holy and just and good. I want you to be careful of it. Even the small things, the jots and the tittles, must not be neglected. Those who keep the law are accounted great in the kingdom of heaven. But watch, lest you think that outward obedience is all that the law requires. More than that is demanded. God wants you to keep the law both outwardly and in the heart. Only as you do so, can you be said to be a commandment keeper.”

Tradition

Christ had continual difficulty with the question of tradition. Then, as now, men were wedded to custom. Whatever the fathers did or had done was right, even though it conflicted with the commandments of God.

Once some Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem came to Him with the complaint that His disciples ate with unwashed hands. The question of washing the hands before eating was not concerned with cleanliness as such, but was a ceremonial washing, one of the added ordinances. This fact gave Jesus an opportunity to point a lesson. When “the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?” He countered by saying: “Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things you do. And he said unto them, Full well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition.” Mark 7:5-9.

The issue was clearly between the traditions of men and the commandments of God. How old that controversy is! There was nothing wrong with this particular tradition. The ceremonial washing did not do much good so far as cleanliness is concerned, but neither did it do harm. It was an “innocent” tradition. And yet it aroused Jesus' anger to have the people observe this ceremony while they were rejecting or as the margin has it, “Laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men.... and

many other such like things you do.” It is transparently clear that Jesus was displeased with tradition when it interfered with the commandments of God. The principle still holds good. Any worship is vain that rejects God's law for the custom of men. In this respect we need to be as careful as they, lest our worship merit the frown of Christ.

Continuing His instruction on this point, Christ called their attention to the fifth commandment, “Honor thy father and thy mother,” and showed how they disregarded this vital precept while claiming to honor it. It was the duty of children then, as now, to help their parents in need. However, the Jews had a custom that enabled them to escape this responsibility. It was the simple expedient of hypocritically dedicating property to the Temple, a custom which they called corban. After a thing had become corban it could not be used for any charitable object; it belonged to the Temple. At the same time the law did not require that the property be given to the Temple while the donor was still living. That is, he could give it to the Temple and still retain it for his use as long as he lived. This would give him a reputation for charity; and also relieve him of the responsibility of supporting his parents.

This aroused Jesus' wrath. “You say,” Christ continued, “if a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou might be profited by me; he shall be free. And you suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which you have delivered: and many such like things do you.” Mark 7:11-13. With Jesus human consideration outweighed tradition. Again He made the observation that they were making the Word of God of none effect by their traditions. “And many such like things do you.”

On one occasion a scribe came to Jesus and asked Him, ‘Which is the first commandment of all?’—Many of those who came to Jesus to ask questions did so to entrap Him, but this man was honest. Jesus answered him: “The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou has said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that dared ask him any question.” Mark 12:29-34.

One part of the scribe's response to Jesus' answer deserves special attention. It is this: ‘Well, Master, thou has said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.’ Verses 32, 33.

The scribe had come to understand that there was something better than burnt offerings and sacrifices. These were part of the Jewish economy and had to do with the Temple, and as such were acceptable. But as Jesus summed up the law in the two great principles, the scribe immediately realized that here was something better than burnt offerings and sacrifices.

Sacrifices in the Temple were offered mostly in recognition of the need of atonement for sin. This was especially true of sin and trespass offerings. When a man had sinned he was to bring his sin offering. Through that he obtained forgiveness and pardon, and was restored to fellowship with God. It was a wonderful provision, prefiguring the full and free salvation offered in Lamb of God, who was to take away the sin of the world.

With the regulations concerning sacrifices the scribe was familiar. He knew that it was the transgression of the law that made sacrifices necessary. He also knew that it was not necessary to bring a sin offering if there had been no transgression. When Jesus summed up the law in the two great commandments, the scribe suddenly realized that here was something better than sacrifices. If it were possible to keep the law, no more sin offerings were needed. It is to this that the writer of Hebrews has reference when he says, “The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the corners thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.” Hebrews 10: 1, 2.

Jesus reduced the keeping of the law to two great principles: love to God and love to man. How simple that seemed to be! If a man loves God, he will do His will, and will not transgress. He will not wish to curse God, or have other gods, or violate the Sabbath. If he loves his neighbor, he will not wish to do his neighbor any harm. He will not steal from him or covet his goods or kill him. Such would be far from his thoughts. The scribe saw this and said, This “is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” Immediately Jesus responded, “Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.” Mark 12:34. “And no man after that dared ask him any question.”

The scribe and those with him understood what was involved in the answer Jesus had given. They decided not to ask any more questions. They saw clearly that if Jesus had His way, if men really loved their neighbors as themselves, and God above all, there would be an end to their imposing ritual, and there would be no more need of sin and trespass offerings. If they accepted Jesus as their sacrifice, they might as well close the Temple. Moreover, they also realized that the Temple of which they were so proud had its existence only because of sin. What would happen if they should accept the teachings of Jesus and go and sin no more? They would not need the Temple.

A Question and an Answer

On a certain occasion a young man came to Jesus “and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why call thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He said unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shall do no murder, Thou shall not commit adultery, Thou shall not steal, Thou shall not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself. The young man said unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect,

go and sell that thou has, and give to the poor, and thou shall have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.” Matthew 19:16-22.

Some may be a little perplexed at the answer which Jesus gave this young man when he asked what he should do to have eternal life. “Keep the commandments,” Jesus said. When the man asked which commandments were meant, Jesus referred him to the law of God as contained in the ten precepts. Why did Jesus tell him to keep the commandments when He might have told him to have faith, or to give his heart to God, or any one of the many things that are appropriate for such an occasion?

That this was not the only time Jesus answered this way is evident from the record. On another occasion a lawyer stood up and asked, ‘Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ Luke 10:25. To this Jesus answered: ‘What is written in the law? How reads thou? And he answering said, Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou has answered right: this do, and thou shall live.’ Luke 10:26-28.

It cannot be supposed that Jesus treated their questions lightly and gave them answers not in harmony with the facts. But if this is really the answer to the question of how eternal life may be gained, how can we explain or justify the answer? It seems so at variance with the answer most ministers of today would give that some amplification or explanation is in order. If Jesus were here today, and a member of some ministerial association should ask Him how He would answer the question of how eternal life might be obtained, and Jesus should answer now as He did then, would He be considered evangelical? It is highly probable that He would be asked to explain His answer.

The lawyer, in reply to Jesus' question of how he read the law, had answered, “Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.” Verse 27. The lawyer understood that the law demanded love to God and love to man. Christ said, “Thou has answered right: this do, and thou shall live.”

If we take Jesus' interpretation of the law as the law of love, may we not see light in the answer Jesus gave? “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” Romans 13: 10. God Himself is love. His law is love. Christ says, “If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.” “Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” if you love me, keep my commandments.” John 15:10; 14:23, 15.

Apparently we need a new view of the law of God- It is not, as some suppose, a yoke of bondage; it is not a hard taskmaster; it is not a bond of restraint. It is a glorious law of liberty, of love, of friendly guidance. It is God-ordained, a transcript of His own character, the most precious thing in the sanctuary above, the foundation of the mercy seat and of the glorious plan of salvation. It is kept in the heart of Christ, free from any possible harm that might come to it. (Psalm 40:8.) It is the perfect embodiment of the will of God, the supreme rule of life. Why should any think lightly of it? It reflects the very heart and mind of the Almighty.

The law of love is the law of life. No man who does not love God can be saved. But “this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.” I John 5:3. No man can be saved who does not know God. But “he that said, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” I John 2:4. No man can be saved who continues in sin. And “sin is the transgression of the law.” I John 3:4. If, therefore, we are to be saved, we must love God and keep His commandments. If we say we love God, we must prove that love in the way God demands. We must stop transgressing the law, for “sin is the transgression of the law.” At the conclusion of His work on earth Christ could say, I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.” John 15: 10. If we follow His example, we shall not go far astray.

With Christ's definition in mind that the law of God is the law of love, and that on this hang all the law and the prophets, we accept His statement of the law as the way of life. There is no other way. “He that loves not know not God; for God is love.” I John 4:8. But to know God is life eternal. (John 17:3.) If, therefore, we do not know God unless we love, and the knowledge of God is eternal life, and the only way that “we do know that we know him” is if we “keep his commandments,” and this keeping of the commandments “is the love of God,” we are again brought up to the proposition that the law of God plays a prominent part in our relationship to God. (1 John 2:3; 5:3.) Only at the peril of our souls can we neglect it. Such was the teaching of Jesus, and, being the teaching of Jesus, it is also the teaching of all who follow Him.

7. Sin-An Ugly Word

IN THE whole English language there is no uglier word than sin. Its mention brings up memories that are painful, saddening, and often heartbreaking. Sin is the cause of all the suffering that is or has been or ever will be. There is not a sorrow or a tear, not a heartache or an anguish but that sin is lurking near as its cause. It is no respecter of persons. It attacks and ruins all alike. No one is exempt. It affects not only the one it attacks. Through him it brings sorrow and shame to all his loved ones. It has no redeeming virtue. It is evil and only evil.

One of the strange effects of sin is that the innocent suffers with the guilty. How many mothers there are who have suffered because of their wayward sons! How many wives and children there are who have suffered because of the dereliction of a husband and father! How many fathers there are who have gone through the deep waters because of an ungrateful son or a wayward daughter! Only eternity will reveal the havoc sin has wrought and the suffering it has caused.

No one has suffered more than God because of sin, and no one has paid a greater price because of it. A look at the cross testifies to the truth of this. There the innocent suffered for the guilty. Such is the nature of sin. Were it otherwise, it would not be sin.

How could it be imagined that sin could affect the angels in heaven? Or that it could affect God? Yet that is what it has done. Sin caused the Son of God to come down from heaven, to live and die among men. It hanged Him on a cross, pierced His hands and feet with cruel nails, and broke His heart. The agony of those dreadful hours is symbolic of the agony that has been in the heart of God since the inception of sin. On Calvary a fleeting glimpse was given of this supreme sorrow, and then the veil was drawn. But enough was revealed. We know what sin will do; we know what sin has done. If sin had its way, it would again tear God from the throne, lacerate His back with stripes, put a crown of thorns upon His brow, spit in His face, and then nail Him to the tree. It has done that once, and it has not changed its nature. Sin is ever the same.

It might be supposed that such a monstrous thing would be repulsive and forbidding. This is not always the case, however. Sin is often attractive, even beautiful, alluring. At times it keeps good company, is well dressed, intelligent, vivacious, and highly artistic. In many cases it is cultured, exhibits good taste, is a lover of music, and delights in the social hour. It hobnobs with bishops and statesmen and the great of the earth, but is, at the same time, at home in the hovel and the brothel. It is generally admitted with pleasure and is only seldom repulsed. It is a universal favorite.

This, however, is true only at the beginning of its acquaintance. It soon changes its attitude. Where once it was ingratiating and agreeable, it becomes repugnant. Where once prevailed beauty, pleasure, and culture, are now hideousness, pain, and coarse vulgarity. Gone are its attractiveness and physical charm. Repulsiveness and coarseness have taken their place.

Sin at Its Beginning and End

Go with me to the dance hall: Lithe, swaying bodies in rhythmic motion, beautiful lighting effect, enchanting music, lively conversation, athletic young men and charming girls, perfect appointments—the heart could wish for little more. Time passes rapidly. It is a wonderful evening. All is like a dream. Who could imagine that this is the beginning of that which follows? Who could imagine that this is often the beginning of sorrow, shame, degradation, suffering? All looks so innocent, so charming. But go with me to another place.

We are in a hospital. There is the girl who a few years ago was young, gay, brilliant. Now she is a raving maniac. There is that young man of promise, once strong, able, ambitious. Now he is wasting away with a loathsome disease. Here are men and women who once thought that just one drink would do no harm, one fling at unlawful indulgence would have no unpleasant results. They learned too late that the wage of sin is death, often a lingering, horrible death, and that it does not pay to play with fire. They have found, as all will find, that the end of sin is completely different from its beginning, and that the consequences of transgression are sure and certain. They have learned that the only surety of not having to take the last step is in not taking the first, that the surest cure is prevention.

Is There Any Hope?

What can be done about sin? Is there no hope, no help? Must all who are subject to it go down to destruction? Must sin reign forever both in the world and in our mortal bodies? Are we all doomed to hopeless misery and eternal extinction?

Apart from Christ there is no hope for the human race. Men have battled sin in their own strength for millenniums, but sin has come out victorious. There is no help for sin from any human source. There is help and hope only in God.

It was to battle with and to overcome sin that Christ came to this world. To Joseph, the husband of Mary, it was announced, “Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21. That Jesus was to save man from sin was uppermost in the mind of the angel who talked with Joseph. Angels had had experience with sin. Lucifer, one of the highest of all created beings, had sinned in heaven. Because of this, the peace and harmony that had existed from time immemorial were broken, and “there was war in heaven.” Revelation 12:7. The result was that “the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” Verse 9.

The Origin of Sin

Sin had its beginning with Lucifer, the highest of all created beings. His name was later changed to Satan, and it is under this name that we best know him. In the beginning he was one of the happy creatures that God had created to enjoy life and association with Him, but when sin entered all was changed.

Here is what the Bible says of Lucifer and his fall. “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations! For thou hast said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.” Isaiah 14:12-14.

This passage throws some light on the reason for Lucifer's rebellion. He wanted to exalt himself to a position of equality with God. Five times in these verses the statement I will” occurs: I will ascend into heaven,” I will exalt my throne,” I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation,” I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,” I will be like the most High.” There can be no doubt what Lucifer had in mind. He was not satisfied with the position he had. Neither was he satisfied with merely a higher position. Nothing would satisfy him but the highest position. He wanted to be like the Most High. He would exalt his throne above the stars of God.

A throne is symbolic of power, of government. Lucifer wanted to establish his throne, his government, above the stars of God, above the angels. He wanted to rule over them. More than this, he wanted to be like the Most High, equal in power with God Himself.

This, of course, was nothing less than rebellion. The angels were confronted with the choice of casting their lot with the rebel, or remaining true to God. From the fact that when Lucifer at last was cast out of heaven many of the angels were cast out with him, we gain the information that he was not alone in his rebellion, and that there were enough angels on his side to call the conflict a war. The rebels were at last cast out of heaven and the controversy transferred to this earth.

From the book of Ezekiel we gain some additional information about Lucifer. Under the symbol of the king of Tyre, this is said of him: "Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus said the Lord God; Thou sealed up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou has been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou was created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covered; and I have set thee so: thou was upon the holy mountain of God; thou has walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou was perfect in thy ways from the day that thou was created, till iniquity was found in thee." Ezekiel 28:12-15.

These verses state that Lucifer was perfect in his ways from the day he was created; that he was full of wisdom and perfect in beauty; that he was the anointed cherub that covered, and that God had set him so; that he was upon the holy mountain of God, and that he also had been in Eden, the garden of God, and had walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire, but that at last iniquity had been found in him.

Other information is found in verse 2, where Lucifer is again mentioned under the same symbol: "Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus said the Lord God; Because your heart is lifted up, and thou has said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set your heart as the heart of God'. From this verse we learn that not only did Lucifer wish to become as God but that he made the definite claim, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God."

Verses sixteen and seventeen add a little more to our knowledge. "By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou has sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou has corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee."

Here we learn that Lucifer sinned; that because of this he was cast out and would eventually be destroyed; that the cause of the trouble lay in the fact that his heart was lifted up; and that he had corrupted his wisdom.

Seven Deadly Sins

If we sum up these statements, we get the following results: Lucifer was once an honored angel, a cherub. He was perfect in beauty, full of wisdom, and was admitted to the holy mountain of God, where he walked in the midst of the stones of fire. He was in Eden, the garden of God, of which the one on earth was evidently a copy. His ways were perfect, and God gave him the work of "covering," and also anointed him.

But Lucifer was not satisfied. He was envious of God. He became lifted up because of his beauty; he corrupted his wisdom because of his brightness, and decided upon a course which he hoped would make him equal to God. He went so far that he said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God." It was time for God to take action. So He decided that Lucifer must be cast out of heaven.

Five characteristics stand out in the fall of Lucifer, which are basic in the consideration of the causes of his fall. These five are envy, discontent, pride, self-will or selfishness, and covetousness. We might call these basic sins.

To these five sins we add two more, which Jesus specifically mentions. 'You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.'" John 8:44.

Satan is here called a murderer from the beginning and the father of lies. From the connection in which it is mentioned, we take it for granted that Satan was a liar from the beginning as well as a murderer. He "abode not in the truth."

As murder begins with hatred and anger, we may add two more to the list of sins which are basic in the fall of Lucifer, namely, hatred and untruthfulness. Our list, therefore, stands thus, though not necessarily in this order: envy, discontent, pride, selfishness, covetousness, hatred, lying.

Jesus' Attitude Toward Sin

In the original controversy with Lucifer, Christ had a prominent part. He had been one with the Father from eternity, and He was the one who led the armies of heaven in the war against the rebels. "Michael [Christ] and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels." Revelation 12:7. Being thus intimately associated with events from the beginning, Christ is in a peculiarly advantageous position to recognize the first outcroppings of sin and to warn us against them. He is quick to detect the first danger signal. We shall do well to heed His warnings.

This brings us to the consideration of sin as Christ saw it. He knows its origin. He has seen the results of it both in heaven and in earth, and He has come to save us from it. He is the only one who can do it, for there is no "salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12.

The first thing that strikes us as we consider Jesus' reaction to sin and His teachings concerning it, is that He does not lay the stress which we might expect on some of the sins which men call great, but that, on the other hand, He considers very heinous some sins which are not ordinarily so considered. In fact, some of the sins that merited His greatest rebukes men consider quite respectable. If we accept Jesus' valuation of sin, we may have to revise our estimate of sins.

Jesus looked at the heart. Motives were more important to Him than acts. Not that He condoned sin in the act. Far from it; but He looked to the fountain whence evil things proceed, and was more interested in cleansing the fountain than in damming the foul stream. It was clear to Him that if the fruit was evil, it was because the tree was evil, and that it was of little use to pluck off the evil fruit so long as the tree continued to produce more of the same kind. "Do men gather grapes of thorns," He said, "or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them." Matthew 7:16-20.

"How can you," He said, "being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things." Matthew 12:34, 35.

"How can you, being evil, speak good things?" Christ asks. It cannot be done. Cleanse the fountain, and the stream will become clear. "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit." Verse 33.

Thus Jesus went to the root of the matter. A man might speak evil words. That he ought not to do, but the mere elimination of evil words was not satisfactory to Christ. Back of evil words was an evil heart. In that Jesus was interested. He knew that a corrupt tree could not bring forth good fruit, and that it was largely a waste of time to attempt to make it do so. "Make the tree good," He said. This sounds like good reasoning.

Jesus ever reasoned thus. Murder, He said, has its roots in hatred; adultery, in unclean thoughts; stealing, in covetousness. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man." Mark 7:21-23.

To Jesus, the inward state of the heart was more important than outward conformity. None was stricter in conduct than He, or demanded more of His followers. He wanted them to shun the very appearance of evil. But nevertheless He first looked to the heart. There was the fountain of life.

As we consider the seven sins which were basic in the fall of Lucifer, we find that they are basic in all sins. Jesus considered them important enough to call our attention to them and to warn us of them. He had had experience with them in heaven, and He knew how deceitful they were. He does not want any to be in ignorance of their nature. The true follower of the Master will have the same attitude toward sin which Jesus had. To him "small" sins will be accounted great. Envy, discontent, pride, selfishness, covetousness, hatred, and lying may seem comparatively innocent faults, not of sufficient moment to cause exclusion from the realm of bliss. But these were the beginnings of sin in heaven. The true Christian will shun their very appearance.

8. Seven Deadly Sins

IN THE preceding chapter we noted seven sins which were basic in the fall of Lucifer. These seven are envy, discontent, pride, selfishness, covetousness, hatred, and lying. Since these sins constituted the beginning of sin in the universe, and are among the most deceitful of all sins, it may be well to consider them more in detail. When we understand how sin began we can better avoid its first appearance.

Envy

Envy is closely related to discontent. The envious man is a discontented man. Note the company that envy keeps: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; ... envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" Galatians 5:19-21. It was because Joseph's "brethren envied him" that they, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt." Genesis 37: 11; Acts 7:9. It was because Korah, Dathan, and Abiram "envied Moses" that they were swallowed up as the earth opened, and "a fire was kindled in their company." Psalm 106:16, 18. It was because the "Jews which believed not were "moved with envy" that they tried to kill Paul. Acts 17:5. It was because the chief priests were envious of Christ that they attempted to kill Him, Even "Pilate . . . knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy." Mark 15:9, 10.

"Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." James 3:16. "Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal, and walk as men?" I Corinthians 3:3. Those who at last are given "over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient," are such as are "full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity. . . . who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Romans 1:28-32.

"They which commit such things are worthy of death." These are solemn words. To be envious does not seem a great sin to some, but in the sight of God it is counted worthy of death. Envy played a large part in Lucifer's fall; envy raised up rebellion against Moses; envy sold Joseph into Egypt; envy attempted to kill Paul; envy gave Jesus to be crucified. With such a record it is well to heed the admonition of the apostle Peter and lay aside "all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking." I Peter 2: 1.

No man is safe from this sin until he has learned to rejoice in the success of others. If there is jealousy in the heart, if there is envy when others are spoken well of, there is danger. The musician who cannot bear to have another musician praised, is of small

caliber, however great his name. The scientist who is illiberal in his estimate of the accomplishment of other scientists is unworthy of the name. The preacher who is jealous of the success of others and fails to give them due credit for work done, is not fit for the kingdom. God loves the man who is willing to work, and work hard, without thinking of the reward. There are some who are not even willing to shut a door without pay. (Malachi 1:10.) Such do not have the spirit of Christ.

Although discontent and envy are related, they are not identical. Discontent is a lack of satisfaction with oneself or one's own conditions, unrest in the mind. Envy has reference to one's feeling toward another, because of his superior success or endowments or possessions, and generally issues in resentment and grudge. The two words are interactive: envy breeds discontent and dissatisfaction, and in turn discontent breeds envy. Discontent may possibly exist without envy, but envy almost surely leads to discontent.

Discontent

Some might hesitate to call discontent sin. Yet few sins have a more sinister nature and are the cause of more misery. Discontent gives a distorted view of life and events, sours the disposition, and causes irritation and evil thoughts. It finds its sole consolation in having others share its misery and gloomy outlook. It is a stranger to love, and is antithetical to faith and hope. Like misery, it loves company; in fact, misery and discontent are nearly synonymous.

Discontent is mostly a state of mind. A person may be entirely satisfied with his lot; he may not be in want in any way; but suddenly he discovers that someone else has what he has not, and immediately he becomes dissatisfied. As he broods over the matter he becomes convinced that he has been ill treated, that someone is against him, and after a while the situation becomes intolerable to him and he feels that he can stand it no longer. He is convinced that he is right and that in taking steps to rectify the alleged injustice he is merely doing his little share in establishing justice in the earth. Had he the gift to see himself as others see him, he would know that his motives are not as pure as he would have them appear, that envy and jealousy play a large part in his feelings, that evil thoughts and evil words and works have resulted, and that a residue of bitterness remains that is not from God.

Christ considered the matter of discontent of such importance that He devoted a parable to it. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And when he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them, Go you also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and said unto them, Why stand you here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He said unto them, Go you also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall you receive.

"So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard said unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou has made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: did not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that your is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is your eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen." Matthew 20:1-16.

Some who read this parable are puzzled as to its meaning. They are doubtful that the householder did right. Should not men who work long hours have more pay than those who work only a short time? They are inclined to believe that the men had just cause for complaint. Such fail to get the lesson which Christ was attempting to teach.

The householder had agreed with the men who were hired early in the day that they should have a penny each. A mutually satisfactory arrangement had been reached, and the men were presumably satisfied, as a penny was the usual pay in those times for a day's work. They labored all day without complaint, expecting to get their penny when the day was done. They would doubtless have been satisfied with their bargain had it not happened that those who had labored only a short time were paid off first and given a penny for their work. When the first laborers saw this they expected to get more; and when they did riot they began to murmur. The householder took them aside and told them that he had done them no harm. They had agreed to work for a penny; they had received a penny, and they should be satisfied. Is your eye evil," the householder says, "because I am good?"

The lesson here is not that all men should have the same pay whether they work much or little. Christ's other teachings make it very plain that a man is worthy of his hire, and that the reward is to be proportionate to the effort put forth. The lesson is rather that a man is to abide by the bargain he has made, and not whine; and that it is none of his concern if others are treated better than he, or get more pay.

This is not an easy lesson to learn. Much of our discontent arises, not from any injustice done as such, but because we have discovered that others have more than we, or we think they are treated better. Immediately our complaints begin.

After the resurrection Jesus had a talk with Peter, and then asked him to follow Him. Peter did so, but noticed that John followed also. Peter did not like this, and said as much to Jesus. The rebuke which Peter received, he did not forget soon; nor should we. "Jesus said unto him, if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me." John 21:22.

"What is that to thee?" In other words, is that any of your affair? How often we choose to make that our business with which we have nothing to do! It would be well if we could learn to attend to our own affairs, and let others' alone. We would be better off; and so would they.

Once some soldiers came to John the Baptist and asked him what they should do. He answered, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." Luke 3:14. The soldiers did not get a large wage.

They therefore used other means, at times unlawful, to increase their income. John's advice was that they do violence to no man and accuse none falsely, but be content with their wages.

"Godliness with contentment is great gain." I Timothy 6:6 Discontentment is a great loss. It is hard--shall we say impossible?-- to be discontented and be a Christian. Discontent leads to gloominess, darkness, discouragement. It leads to jealousy, evil thoughts, and murmuring. It has its roots in covetousness and evil surmising. It is weariness to the bones, and saps the vitality of Christian experience. It is the first step in a long list of evils that may lead a man far from where he intended to go in the first place.

On the other hand, how beautiful is contentment! A contented soul is thankful, whereas a discontented soul is unthankful and has forgotten the many mercies of the Lord. We all need to encourage the virtue of thankfulness. We should be neither unthankful nor unholy, both of which the discontented person is likely to be.

Divine Discontent

To this philosophy some may object, and ask, "Does not a Christian have a right to make a complaint and to attempt to have a wrong adjusted? To this we answer that as a citizen he has the same right as any other citizen, and that not only has he a right, but at times it is his duty to make every possible effort to have an injustice corrected. As a Christian, however, he must be careful lest his attempt to right matters centers about himself only. When others are having a hard time, when others are discriminated against, is he as anxious to have their cases heard as he is to have his own? Or is he merely working for selfish interests and letting others take care of themselves? For a Christian these are vital matters. Unless he can show that he has appeared as often in the defense of others as he has for himself, it would be well for him to examine his motives. No Christian looks out for himself alone. The golden rule has a higher aim.

It may be well to state, however, that there is such a thing as proper discontent, or, as it is sometimes called, divine discontent. This discontent, however, is as far removed from the ordinary discontent as heaven is from earth. We are to be content with such things as we have, but we are never to be content with what we are. Higher, ever higher, must be the aim of the Christian. He must never rest satisfied with present attainments. As soon as he has reached one goal he must set for himself a higher one. As soon as he has won one victory he must plan for a still more aggressive campaign. He must ever press forward to the mark which Christ has set for him. Never must he rest, day or night, if he would perfect holiness in the fear of God.

This divine discontent is commendable in the sight of God. And yet, how men have turned things upside down! They are satisfied with themselves and discontented with almost everything else. Such a state is dangerous, even fatal. We need to pray God to arouse us from our lethargy. Discontent was one of the first sins in heaven.

Pride

Pride is one of the subtlest of sins. By many it is looked upon with indulgence, and it is tolerated in the church. Some influential church members are afflicted with it, and consider it a badge of distinction. The Pharisees of old were proud of their pride. So are the Pharisees of today.

Pride is a sin most offensive to God and hard to eradicate from the life. It was one of the causes of the downfall of Lucifer, and it has lost none of its potency. It poisons every good word and work, and makes of no effect deeds of mercy which might otherwise be commendable. It is closely related to hypocrisy, and often cannot be differentiated from it.

Pride is inordinate self-esteem, conceit, egotism, haughtiness, vanity, arrogance, disdain, lordliness. It is defined as the high esteem one has for oneself because of some fancied or real superiority of person, possession, or achievements, and is ordinarily accompanied by a desire for public notice, approval, or praise. The excessive desire for public notice led the Pharisees of old to stand on the street corners to be seen of men, pretending to pray. The same desire to be noticed leads some preachers to perform antics in the pulpit, and politicians to "play to the gallery," and it is even appealed to in raising money for otherwise worthy purposes.

A Parable

The parable of the Pharisee and the publican is well known. "He spoke this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted." Luke 18:9-14.

The parable was spoken for such as thought that "they were righteous, and despised others." It is impossible for a person to exalt himself without comparing himself to others and concluding that he is better than they. This is what the Pharisees did. They considered themselves righteous and despised others.

In the parable the Pharisee informed God about himself, and told Him how good he was. He did not ask God for anything, and he did not receive anything. He was content with conveying certain information to God which he felt He should have. Having done this, he departed, his work being done. God now knew who he was and what he had done, knew him to be a worthy man, and though he did not need anything at this time, it was well for God to have him in mind.

How different was the humble publican! He did not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven. He simply uttered the words, "God be merciful to me a sinner." "I tell you," Christ said, "this man went down to his house justified rather than the other."

Some theologians lay much stress on the theory of justification. In their anxiety to comprehend the subject adequately, they pursue a panting Greek verb from Dan to Beersheba. Conjugations and tenses, dictionaries and lexicons, ancient and modern usage, commentaries and sources from alpha to omega, are marshaled to prove a moot point; and even then the wise men do not always agree.

What could be simpler than Christ's teaching on justification? The publican doubtless knew little of theology, but he prayed humbly that God would be merciful to him; and he went down to his house justified. Justification is just that simple. Jesus taught no difficult or involved theology.

By way of contrast, note what Christ said of the scribes, "He said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation." Mark 12:38-40.

"These shall receive greater damnation." Christ had little patience with those who loved to have the pre-eminence. They might stand high in the nation and in the church. But Jesus did not so place them.

A Lesson for Peter

Christ's disciples were not exempt from the desire to have a high place. The Gospels mention several occasions on which there was dispute as to who should be the greatest. One such occurrence is recorded in Mark 9:33-35: "He came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that you disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and said unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all."

Jesus had His own way of dealing with such as wished to show off." Note this incident. Once when Jesus had fed the five thousand in the wilderness, He sent the disciples away in the boat, and He went up into the mountain to pray. While He was praying a storm arose, and the twelve had a hard time rowing. Toward morning Jesus came walking to them on the water. The disciples were troubled, and thought Him to be a spirit. Jesus soon calmed them, and came near the boat. Peter conceived a scheme and cried out, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." Matthew 14:28.

There was no need for this. He could just as well have waited for the Lord to come to the boat, but for some reason he decided that he would like to walk on the water. And Jesus humored him. He could have told Peter to stay in the boat. But Jesus permitted him to come, and Peter started out valiantly. We suppose that it was with some hesitancy that he first put his foot on the water; but the water bore him up and Peter walked toward Jesus. It must have been a proud and triumphant Peter who thus was permitted to go to his Lord across the surging billows.

Years ago we read a comment on this in a little volume written by a devout Christian. It gave an almost humorous slant to this incident. As Peter walked toward Jesus he was thinking of the men back in the boat, and yielded to the very human temptation to look around to see whether they were watching him and admiring the ease with which he could walk on the billows. Had he come back without any mishap, the other disciples would never have heard the last of Peter's exploit. He would continually have talked of the time when he walked on the water-at least until he was thoroughly converted. He would triumphantly have asked the others whether they could do the same.

But in turning to look at the men in the boat Peter had to take his eyes off Jesus. Immediately he sank down. When Peter was helped back into the boat he was a wet and chastened Peter. Apparently he never mentioned the incident again. He had learned his lesson. May it not have been for this purpose that Jesus let him walk on the water? May it not be for the same reason that certain things happen to us? Peter is not the only one who needs a lesson of this kind. Too many of us are willing to be admired.

We should not forget that pride was one of the sins that caused the fall of Lucifer. It was the beginning of which the end was rebellion. We need to watch every step we take, lest pride come into the heart." Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished." Proverbs 16:5. Be clothed with humility: for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble." I Peter 5:5. "Pride goes before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." Proverbs 16:18. "He that humbles himself shall be exalted." Luke 14: 11. We are counseled, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." I Peter 5:6. God "shall save the humble person." Job 22:29. With these texts in mind let all serve God with humility, and esteem others better than themselves. This is true Christianity.

Selfishness

Most people like to have their own way. It is an almost universal trait. Yet all should know that it is not given to anyone to have his way most or even much of the time. It is one of the laws of life that this is not to be.

What child is there who does not plan to do just as he pleases when he grows up? While children are small they are compelled by their elders to do many things that they do not like to do. They promise themselves that when they grow up things will be different. They are not going to be ordered around all their lives. They feel that their parents, older brothers and sisters, teachers-everybody-have conspired to make life miserable for them. They are wishing for the time to come when they will be independent of all these. Then they will do as they please.

But alas, they soon find out that the time never comes when they can have their own way. They might finish school and have no more teachers to annoy them; they may establish their own home to get away from parental discipline; they may establish their own business, so as to be independent. But all is of no avail. They still cannot have their own way. Life does not permit them.

Kings do not have their own way. Presidents do not. Even dictators have their difficulties. Only God, says one, has His own way. But God does not have His own way. Probably He has His way less often than anyone else. Sin has come in. Men resist God. He does not have His way with us. In very few lives, in fact, does He rule. No, God does not have His way. If He did, sin and death would be no more, and many things on this earth would be different.

It is one of the "given" things of life that we are not to have our own way. Yet all are struggling to have it. Nations, statesmen, individuals—all are engaged in a futile struggle for supremacy, all trying to get their way, when a little reflection should make it clear that they are attempting the impossible, for there are too many conflicting interests. We might as well learn to adjust ourselves to the inevitable, and we would be much happier for it.

Life is a matter of adjustment. We are here on earth to learn to adjust ourselves. He who learns it well learns to live. He who refuses to adjust himself thereby proclaims himself unfit to associate with others. If we are to live together in peace and harmony in this world or in the world to come, we must learn to get along with others and give them due respect. Only thus is a harmonious and successful life possible. This is one of the chief lessons of life, and only as and when we learn it are we ready for the life to come.

God Runs a Risk

From a merely human viewpoint it seems that God is running a terrific risk in attempting to save humanity. How can He be sure that if He takes a million or two million people to heaven, or a billion or two, they will live together in harmony and peace? Men are not doing it here. Christians are not doing it. There is constant struggle and strife, and the future does not hold out hope for anything better. If God gives men eternal life, so that they will never die, will they not have a longer time to hatch out their evil plans, and will not this make matters worse?

But, says one, will not all the people who are saved be good people? If so, there will be no danger of any kind, and God runs no risk. This is just the problem. How can God be sure that all the people He selects will stay good? How can He be sure that throughout the long eternity sin will never again occur?

This is a vital question, for no one has any inclination to repeat the history of this earth with all its sorrow and misery. When sin is ended we want it to be ended forever.

We are likely to think that this is God's problem, not ours. And this is true. But we are vitally interested in it, nevertheless, for if a rebellion should ever start again in heaven or on earth, we would suffer with the rest. For this reason we are, or should be, greatly interested in the kind of people who are to be saved. If God permits any to get to heaven who are not fit, all will suffer. Although we cannot be as interested as God is, we should be vitally concerned, for we have much at stake.

It is evident that if any are saved who have the least taint of sin, there is danger of the infection's spreading. Sin is like leprosy or cancer. If the least bit of diseased tissue is left in the body, the danger of recurrence is ever present. The only safety is to have all offending matter removed. Even then there must be great carefulness.

Selfishness is one of the deep roots of sin. There are many degrees of it, and its complete eradication is not easy. In its milder forms it appears quite innocent, and some are inclined to believe that it should not be entirely rooted out. They seem to think that a certain amount of selfishness is necessary for existence, and that if it is not carried to extreme, it serves a good purpose. It may be well to explore this subject.

The Great Commandment

When Jesus was asked which was the great commandment in the law, He answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Matthew 22:37-40.

Christ in these words sets forth the law of His kingdom. We are not only to love God; we are to love our fellow men, and we are to love them as ourselves. God is no respecter of persons. His gifts are for all alike. It would not conform with His nature to favor some and neglect others. There must be absolute impartiality. This is the law, and the only law that will ensure peace and happiness.

This law of love destroys all selfishness. If all loved their neighbors, there would be no need unsupplied, for the good Lord has provided for the wants of all His creatures, and it is only when some take more than their share, and hoard it, or fail to distribute it, that want occurs.

The law of the kingdom is the law of love. Love never fails. It thinks no evil, it reports no evil. On the other hand, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise—and is a situation conceivable in which these are entirely absent?—it will think of these things. Love will share. It will do more. It will give all. This is what God did. This is what Christ did. God withheld nothing. Christ withheld nothing. And if God "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Romans 8:32. God could do no more. When He gave His Son He gave all.

Unselfishness is the law of heaven. And unselfishness means more than sharing with others for the sake of a future reward, or for the purpose of being seen of men, or even with the hope of getting recompense at some later time from the person befriended. Note the following rather hard doctrine, as some would call it: "Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makes a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makes a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shall be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Luke 14:12-14.

Feasts of this kind are not very popular or common. Although we understand that the gospel does not forbid the calling together of friends and neighbors for social occasions—rather we believe that Christ encouraged this and Himself attended such gatherings—we are convinced that the scripture quoted has its application. We believe that it is not enough, nor a fulfillment of this

command, merely to contribute a sum of money to provide a feast for the more unfortunate once or twice a year. The gospel is more personal than that. It requires individual service. Even the Old Testament demanded personal application of religion. Is not this the fact that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou sees the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from your own flesh?" Isaiah 58:6, 7.

The Good Samaritan

It was after a certain lawyer had asked Jesus concerning eternal life and had received the answer that he must love God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself, that Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan.

This well-known parable reads as follows: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spends more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinks thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise." Luke 10: 30-37.

In this parable Jesus tells us that our neighbor is not merely the man who lives next door, or one of our relatives, or a member of the same church, or even a citizen of our own country. He may be an entire stranger to us. We may not know his name, and it may be only a chance meeting that brings us together. The one thing that matters is that there is a need, and that we may be able to help. The good Samaritan took the whole burden upon himself. He did not unload the unfortunate man on the innkeeper. He paid for his immediate care and arranged for the future. He could have done no more had it been one of his friends.

It would have been kind of the Samaritan if he had put the man on his beast and taken him to the inn for others to take care of. It was doing more than could be expected of him when the Samaritan provided for the man as he did, and promised to pay any further charges incurred. Christ doubtless gave this direction to the parable to show us what He considers real Christianity to be. The Christian will not spare himself. He will do all that he can, and then ask whether there is any more he can do.

The Samaritan could have passed by on the other side as did the priest and the Levite. He could have argued that probably the robbers were still in the neighborhood, and that it was dangerous to stop. He could have said that the man was not of his nationality but of a nation that hated Samaritans, and that the wounded man would almost certainly not stop to help a Samaritan if the roles were reversed. He could have reasoned that his ministration would not be appreciated, that it would greatly inconvenience him to stop to minister to the victim, and that he did not care to get mixed up in the mess. All this he could have reasoned, but he did not. All he saw was a man who needed help, and he extended it to him. That, Christ says, is Christianity.

Selfishness the Essence of Sin

It would be hard to conceive of less thought of self and of more thought for others than is revealed in this parable. The fact that the man was a Samaritan is important for the reason that he had every ground for believing that the wounded man, being a Jew, hated Samaritans and would have nothing to do with them. (John 4:9.) Despite this the Samaritan did all that he could for the Jew. He did for an enemy all that he would or could do for a friend. We have no record that the Samaritan received any thanks for what he did.

Selfishness is self-love. It puts self before others. As such it is the very opposite of Christianity. Theologians generally hold that sin in its essential nature is selfishness. If love of God is Christianity, love of self must be anti -Christianity. Selfishness is the very essence of sin.

We believe that it can be shown that selfishness is one of the chief roots in all sin, perhaps the chief one. An examination of the Ten Commandments reveals that the transgression of them is rooted in selfishness. It is the one underlying principle that explains all violation of law. It is clearer in some violations than in others, but it is an essential principle in all. There is no such thing as disinterested sin. A man may be possessed of an evil spirit, and he may also be possessed of himself; and all men are thus possessed to a greater or a lesser degree.

If we understood better the heinous nature of selfishness, we would shun its first manifestation. Selfishness is a state of the heart and is not always shown in outward acts. In fact, it is possible for a person to do what outwardly appears to be a generous deed, but inwardly be contaminated with the worst kind of selfishness.

The man who contributes money or services to a political campaign and expects to be reimbursed in some way, is not generous. The man who serves God or contributes to His cause for the purpose of being saved is not actuated by pure motives. The man who does right because it pays, or who is honest because it is the best policy, has yet something to learn of Christian ethics. In fact, as we survey fields of Christian activity we wonder how much is done without ulterior motives, and whether selfishness is not connected with many of our apparently generous endeavors.

We must be careful, however, lest our reasoning bring us to the conclusion that all men are actuated by unworthy motives, and we are thus led to take the same position which Satan took when he accused Job of serving God for selfish advantage. There are many who worship God out of a pure heart, who are honest and sincere, and whose motives are unquestioned. This we not only admit but are glad to state. It is well for all of us, however, to adjudge our own motives, lest we mix selfishness with the pure gold of

obedience. God wants us to serve Him because it is right, not for selfish advantage. Those who worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Covetousness

The commandment, “Thou shall not covet,” was the one which brought Paul to a consideration of the fact that the law condemned the thoughts of the heart as well as the outward act. I had not known lust,” he says, “except the law had said, Thou shall not covet.” Romans 7:7. By this Paul does not mean that he had not known lust as such, but rather that he had not known lust as sin. He knew that immorality was sin, but now it was revealed to him that the law went deeper than the outward act, and that coveting was sin also. This made an entire change in his conception of the law's demand. He now knew that the law dealt with the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Covetousness has by some been called the mother of sins. The desire to sin first arises in the heart before it finds expression in the act. It is this first desire that needs to be watched, or it will blossom into full-blown sin.

For this reason covetousness is justly counted one of the worst sins in the whole category of transgressions, even though it does not appear as bad as some other sins. It should be remembered, however, that small rattlesnakes are also snakes, and that they grow into bigger ones. It is well to watch the first outcroppings of covetousness and quench every unlawful desire, lest a fire be started that cannot be put out.

Against this sin Christ warned most earnestly. “He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.” Luke 12:15.

Beware of covetousness. It may look innocent and appear to do little harm. But it poisons the very wellspring of life and taints every action.

Another Parable

To impress upon men the wickedness of covetousness, Christ spoke this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou has much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou has provided? So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” Luke 12:16-21.

The rich man did not murder anyone; he did not reproach the name of God; he did not violate the Sabbath. He merely decided to build bigger barns in which to store his abundant harvest. Judged by any human standard of conduct, he was not a wicked man. He would not have been judged by a jury of his fellow citizens as having done anything reprehensible. They would have thought him a prudent man who provided for the future. He was one of the “substantial” citizens. Why should any complaint be lodged against him? He was erecting good buildings and deserved commendation for his enterprise.

Apparently it did not occur to the rich man that he was his brother's keeper. It did not enter his mind to share with those who did not have much of this world's goods. He had no conception of his responsibility to others. He thought only of self.

The rich man did not consider that the abundance of his harvest presented an opportunity to help others. To him it only presented a problem of how to take care of the abundance. “What shall I do,” he said, “because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?” His dilemma could easily have been solved had he considered himself a steward instead of the owner. God had given him the harvest, but he felt no obligation to his fellow men. He did not want to share with others what God had given him. He was intent on enjoying himself for years to come. He would take his ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

Then came the summons. “This night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou has provided?” Had he shared with others, had he given to the poor, he would have been rich toward God, and would have had a treasure in heaven. Now he had nothing. He had not been wise. He was a fool. Christ knew the evil of covetousness. He had seen it develop in Lucifer until it culminated in a desire to be like God and a readiness to do anything to reach the coveted goal. Beware of covetousness, He warned. It may seem innocent, but its end is death.

Pharisaic Covetousness

The Pharisees made a great show of their religion. For pretense they made long prayers, and were willing to compass sea and land to make one proselyte. They loved the uppermost seats at the feasts, and were very punctilious about ceremonial observances. At the same time they devoured widow's houses, omitted the weightier matters of the law, and “within” were “full of extortion and excess.” Matthew 23:25. It was to them especially that these words were addressed: “No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. And he said unto them, You are they which justify yourselves before men; but God know your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” Luke 16:13-15.

The Pharisees heard these things and derided the Master. Were they not serving God? The whole nation could testify to that fact. They were very religious. Some of them fasted twice in the week, all of them made long prayers, and they were careful about their Temple attendance. The fact that they did these things to be seen of men did not seem to disturb them. They might take some advantage of widows, but when Christ said that they were full of extortion and excess, He was going too far. And when He added that “that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God, they could but deride Him. They felt that they were not

only highly esteemed among men but also highly esteemed of God, that it was Christ who needed to revise His estimate of values, not they.

Thus is covetousness deceitful. The Pharisees were not wicked men in the ordinary sense. They were highly religious, and probably not bad morally. They attended church, and did many commendable things. But when Christ saw the covetousness which possessed them He could not fail to warn them that this one trait nullified all the good they could otherwise do. It was as poison that contaminated every otherwise worthy endeavor.

It is not money or wealth only that men covet. Many are willing to sell their souls for position, for plaudit, for power. It is the overweening ambition of men that is causing so much evil and oppression in the world today. Nations have been plunged into war, millions have been killed, billions in property have been destroyed to feed the ambition of a few men. And the end is not yet.

This lust for power and place has invaded the church. Men and armies have fought to uphold one or the other side in a religious controversy. Men have vied with one another for the highest spiritual honors till we find those who are willing to be worshiped, who even sit in the temple of God, showing themselves that they are God. Strife for the high place was common among the disciples of Christ's day. He rebuked them for this. He does the same today.

Covetousness among individuals is not confined to misers and Pharisees. Many others are affected by it in a smaller or larger degree. Few are willing to admit that they have any responsibility beyond their immediate relatives or neighborhood. To be self-centered, to think mostly or only of self, is a common human trait. Of this we are to beware.

Covetousness leads to stealing, to dishonesty of all kinds, to defalcations, to marital difficulties. There are few fields, indeed, into which covetousness does not enter. It is a sin that affects church members and worldlings alike. And as it is one of the "respectable" sins, it is the more dangerous. It contributed much to Lucifer's fall. It is still a vital factor in many other falls.

Hatred and Lying

Christ stated that Satan was a murderer from the beginning and also a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44.) This places these two sins as primary sins. Murder has its beginning in the heart, in hatred and anger. (Matthew 5:21-23.) It is the heart, therefore, that needs to be guarded, lest evil and wicked thoughts, anger and hatred, creep in.

It is informative to be told by Christ that Satan was a murderer from the beginning. We doubt that the angels understood this when Lucifer first made his advances to them and tried to persuade them to join him in rebellion. From Christ's statement it appears that Satan had thought the matter through and was willing to go to any length that promised success, even murder. That such thoughts really possessed him, Satan showed at Calvary. There he hanged the Son of God on the tree, after cruelly scourging Him. This demonstrates how far sin will carry an individual after he begins to yield. The end is not always predictable from the beginning.

Satan "abode not in the truth." God is truth, and Lucifer was with God. But he did not abide in the truth. He was not honest. He said and did that which was not true. He was deceitful. On this ground God could not meet him, for God cannot lie. Satan could use weapons which God could not.

Thus it has always been and always will be, till sin shall be no more. It is marvelous how untruth can be made to appear as truth by those who are expert in falsification. How often we have heard stories told that sounded plausible, whereas we knew that there was hardly a word of truth in them. And apparently some can tell a story often enough to believe it themselves, and to appear hurt when others do not. (2 Thessalonians 2:11) This illustrates the deceitfulness of lying, and constitutes a mighty argument for truth.

It is well not only to tell and to live the truth but to abide in it. It is of little use to have a profession of religion if those who know us best are not convinced of our honesty of intention. Abiding in the truth is not merely telling the truth. It is living in an atmosphere of honesty that will not permit of any pretense, hypocrisy, or extravagance. God wants His people to be honest. Nothing else will do.

Conclusion

We have now discussed briefly the seven deadly sins: envy, discontent, pride, selfishness, covetousness, hatred, and lying. These are not such as would ordinarily be picked out as the worst sins. In fact, as has been pointed out, some of them seem rather innocent. The first five are common even in the church, and the latter two are not uncommon. As we look at them and understand that these are the sins that caused Lucifer's fall, we might well take heed. Envy, discontent, pride, selfishness, covetousness—these five. May God help us to eschew them! And hatred and lying may they not once be named among us! White lies are also lies. Small hatreds are also hatreds. We are not to hate any person. The only hatred allowed a Christian is hatred of sin.

We have stated that we might need to revise our conception of sin. Is there not danger that the evil one may cause us to believe that the very sins which brought about his fall are innocent sins? If that is his intent, he has succeeded well; for practically the whole world has accepted his estimate of the sins here mentioned.

Of Christ it is written: "Thou has loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Hebrews 1:9.

Whatever Christ did was perfect. Even His hatred was perfect. No one ever loved as Jesus loved, and no one ever hated as Jesus hated. He knew sin. He knew what it had done. He knew what it would do if it were given free rein. And He hated it. All the misery and sorrow in the world have come because of it, and He wants to make sure that such a thing shall never happen again. God loves men enough to see to it that nothing that savors of sin shall ever again find an entrance in heaven or on earth. That is why He is so particular in selecting those who are to be saved.

Tried

Some think that God is too strict, that He requires too much, and that He should be more liberal. God forbid! We do not want sin in heaven any more than God does. We do not want to run the risk of having another six thousand years to demonstrate the impossibility of sin's harmonizing with life. We have had enough of it, and so has God. Never must sin be permitted to recur. God has taken every precaution, so that nothing of the kind will ever happen again.

Everyone that gains entrance to the mansions above must pass a rigid examination. He must be clean, pure, and tried. This last point is vital. It is not enough for him to be honest and good. He must also be tried. It is of this the angel speaks when he says, 'Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried.' Daniel 12:10. 'When he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life.' James 1:12.

Adam was innocent, yet a test was necessary. He did not stand the test. Those who at last are saved will have been tried, and will have stood the test. Nothing can ever make them sin. They will die, but they will not sin. And so the blessed promise is given: "Affliction shall not rise up the second time." Nahum 1:9.

We should thank God that He has shown us the nature of sin and has warned us that we must beware of its mildest manifestations. This is our safety. Christ came to save us from sin. And sin is more than the outward act. God desires truth in the inward parts. (Psalm 51:6.) There is where true religion resides.

What a difference it would make in our religion, and what a change would be wrought in our churches, if all Christians would look at sin as Christ looked at it! No more discontent, no more envy or jealousy, in the heart or in the church. No more pride to cause heartaches and disappointments, no selfishness, no covetousness. All hatred would be banished. There would be no more wicked personal dislikes which lead to all manner of evil, no more petty lying and attempts to deceive. Who can but long for such a time to come?

However, Christianity is more than getting rid of certain undesirable traits. It includes the acquisition of the opposite characteristics. And what would that not do for all! Instead of discontent, perfect contentment; instead of envy and jealousy, joy in the success of others. Proper humility would take the place of pride; unselfishness and liberality would substitute for selfishness and covetousness. Love, not hatred, would fill the hearts of all; and sincerity would be basic of all relations. Such a condition would be almost heaven. It would be Christianity, real Christianity, Christ's kind of Christianity. Why should not the church give it a trial? Such a demonstration is due the world.

9. Conversion

CHRISTIANITY is more than a creed, more than mere agreement with certain doctrinal beliefs, more than adherence to certain rules. It is first of all a life, a changed life, a life dedicated to the service of God and humanity. The Christian does not spend his time merely in being good. Like the Master, he goes about doing good. His Christianity will be as Christ's, positive, forceful, dynamic. His influence will be felt wherever he is.

Such a life does not happen. It is not brought about by the unaided will of man or by the desires of the flesh. It is a life lived contrary to natural inclinations, a miracle wrought by the cooperation of divine forces with the human will. In its God ward aspect it is spoken of as a new birth, a work wrought wholly by God in which man can have no active part any more than he can assist in his own natural birth. In its man ward aspect it is spoken of as conversion, in which man has a definite part of willing and doing, aided by the Spirit of God. As God and man thus work together, a new life is formed, man is recreated in the image of God, and a soul is born into the kingdom of heaven.

REPENTANCE

In all the early gospel preaching stress was laid on the need of repentance. John the Baptist's message was, "Repent you: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 3:2. After John was cast into prison "Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 4:17. Mark quotes Jesus as saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the gospel." Mark 1:15. The disciples also, as they set out on their first missionary tour, preached that men should repent." Mark 6:12.

These references make it clear that repentance was central in the preaching of the early church. Once Jesus said to the Jews that unless they repented, they would "all likewise perish." Luke 13:3. Again He said, "Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:3.

The church of the living God will have "the faith of Jesus." They will place stress where He placed it. They will emphasize the new birth; they will emphasize conversion. They will teach that men must be born again if they are to see or enter the kingdom of God; and they will teach that this new birth is the work of God, the work of the Spirit, effected entirely through God's grace upon the heart, for which no human being has or can have any credit. They will also teach that the affect of this work is discernible in the changed life of the individual, and that conversion in its fullest meaning is the outcome of the grace of God in the soul. They will teach that such a changed person has a very tender conscience, and that he will shrink from the very appearance of evil. He will accept the law of God as the standard of conduct; he will manifest sorrow for sin to the extent that he will confess his wrongdoing and make restoration wherever possible; he will declare his faith in God and publicly acknowledge Christ as his Savior., and, above all, he will accept the power of God unto victory over sin. Such a life is evidence and proof of the new birth, and on such a life the church of God will insist.

We must be in earnest in our search for the truth, for "the faith of Jesus." It is evident that we must not leave out of our reckoning anything which Jesus counted essential to salvation. Let the reader carefully check his life, let him examine himself,

whether he be “in the faith.” And if he finds that he comes short, let him speedily repent and rest in the assurance that “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” I John 2:1, 2.

You Must Be Born Again

“Marvel not that I said unto thee, You must be born again.” John 3:7. These words addressed to Nicodemus present the need and urgency of conversion. Nicodemus was an honorable man, a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews. He later became a disciple of Jesus, and was the one who brought myrrh and aloes, “about an hundred pound weight,” for the anointing of the body of Jesus. (John 19:38, 39.) The position he held indicates that he was well acquainted with the laws and ordinances of the Bible, he himself being a teacher and master. (John 3: 10.)

But there was one thing he lacked: an understanding of the new birth. It must have cut him to the quick when Jesus told him that unless he was born anew he could not see the kingdom or enter it. (Verses 3, 5.) To us these words mean that learning, clear perception of truth, high position, or membership in the visible church of God is not sufficient unto salvation. ‘You must be born again.’

Note the definiteness of the statement, ‘You must be born again.’ Without the new birth we are unable to “see the kingdom of God”; we cannot understand the deep or spiritual things of God. Also, without it we shall not be able to “enter into the kingdom of God; that is, there is no salvation, no entering into the life which Christ came to give. We must be born again. The new birth is imperative, not only desirable; it is the condition of seeing and of entering the kingdom of God.

In our search for the true faith of Jesus, for the teaching which He considered essential to life, we must of necessity place conversion very high. We must be born again. We must be born from above. There is no other way. However high a person's standing may be, he can never enter the kingdom of God until he is born anew. These are the words of Jesus, and they are authoritative and final. Natural talents, correct creed, good family connections, high ideals, faultless deportment good as they are in themselves, do not avail to salvation. “You must be born again.”

If Nicodemus, a man high in the councils of the church, did not understand the new birth, we should not be surprised if there are those today who also are puzzled about conversion. It may be well, therefore, to consider this subject that we may better understand what is involved.

The word conversion means to turn about, to face in another direction. It means to turn from evil and to God. It means asking God for forgiveness. It means a repentant attitude, a forsaking of the old life and of old companions in sin, and the acceptance of the responsibilities and blessings that come with joining the brotherhood of Christ.

The decision to turn to God may come after a process of reasoning, during which time the pros and cons have been carefully weighed. It may be precipitated suddenly, like a flash from heaven, as in the case of Paul. It may come about by personal appeal, as in the case of Nicodemus. It may come from study of Scriptures, as in the case of the eunuch from Ethiopia. It is notable that in each case some time--shorter or longer--intervened before the final decision was made, a time for thinking things through.

Two Elements

In all true conversion there is an intellectual as well as an emotional element present; both heart and mind are involved, which is only another way of stating that the whole man is concerned. Between the heart and the mind a balance is struck according to the individual make-up of the person; some being evenly balanced, others leaning a little to the one side or the other. However, both elements must be present; if either is wholly absent there can be no conversion.

By emotion we do not necessarily mean the outward demonstration, such as is often witnessed in so-called revival meetings, and which some preachers work hard to produce. We mean that deep, quiet working of the Spirit of God by which a man becomes convicted and at last yields, though often only after a great struggle. With some it is a struggle of life and death; with others the coming of 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 works secretly, quietly; but it works. Its progress may not be immediately discernible, but after a while it cannot be hid. Others, again, “take their stand” in some revival meeting under great emotional stress, come forward to the altar and find their God. To this latter method there can be no objection if it is followed up with proper instruction, and care is taken that the work go deeper than that of stirred feelings.

There are dear souls who are disturbed because they have not had the identical experience in conversion which others have had, and this has brought some to question the genuineness of their conversion. Some point to the very day and hour when they were converted, and are very positive in all their claims; others cannot do this, and feel at a disadvantage. But let no one be disturbed. God has many ways in which He works. Very seldom, if ever, do two have the same experience in coming to God.

Many are those whose natural disposition or principles will not permit them to take part in some of the scenes witnessed in popular revival services. Their conception of Christianity is altogether foreign to the nature of the modern altar call, and their whole soul revolts against being “high-pressured” into a public manifestation of the most sacred and intimate processes of the heart. We seriously doubt that Nicodemus would have responded to an altar call. It would have repulsed rather than attracted him. It took him months and years before he quietly decided to cast his lot with the Christians. And who is to say that he was not finally and thoroughly converted?

We likewise doubt that Paul would ever have responded to such a call. God spoke to him in a manner that could not be misunderstood; and then He gave him time to adjust himself. Three days Paul sat alone, meditating. And God did not disturb or hurry

him. When Paul was ready he was sent into the city, and there received further light and instruction, resulting in his baptism. (Acts 22:6-16.)

Neither Jeremiah nor John the Baptist was ever converted in the ordinary meaning of conversion. They were sanctified before their birth. (Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:15) Some have thought Christ negligent in permitting months and years to go by, knowing that His own disciples were unconverted. But Christ knew what He was doing. He was building solidly, not for show.

We would therefore counsel such as may be disheartened because they do not have experiences like others to be of good courage. If they know that their sins are forgiven, that they have peace with God and men, let them not be disturbed because others have had a different experience. God knows the heart, and we need not measure ourselves with others.

Revivals

Have we cited these examples because we disbelieve in revivals and in emotion? God forbid. We believe in both. Nothing is clearer in the Bible than that God demands a change of heart on the part of man, and that no one can even see the kingdom of God unless he is born anew. But we do object to artificial standards by which to judge conversion, and the idea that unless a person conform to a certain pattern his Christian experience may be doubted. Also, we do not object and are not opposed to emotion; but we are opposed to playing on the emotions, to developing an atmosphere of tension, to using tricks of psychology and modern revival mechanics, to using hymns for artificial stimulation of the feelings—anything that savors of commercial revivalism with its professional methods to induce results, all of which Christ would reject.

We believe in revivals. Many cannot be reached in any other way. We are not all alike, and there are those who are mightily affected by a pathetic story, an appealing hymn, a sad portrayal, an instance of mother love. Shall these not be reached? Shall we do nothing for them? They are as precious in the sight of God as are others, and they must be brought to Christ by such methods as appeal to them and to which they will respond. These meetings serve a purpose, and so much good is being done that we could not possibly condemn them. We ask God's blessing upon every effort to bring souls to Christ.

We would, however, give a few words of counsel in regard to revivals. The people who are won during such meetings need much personal work done for them, lest they return whence they came. The wise soul winner will use discretion in making his emotional appeals. He may tell an affecting story if it fits naturally into his program, but he will make sure that its effects are directed into channels of serious thoughts which will issue in decisions based not on feeling but on a careful weighing of all the factors involved. The temptation is great to use aroused emotions as a basis for momentous decisions which should have calm and reasoned deliberation as their foundation.

Christ's Method

On the point of making decisions Christ gave a lesson not in harmony with some present-day teaching on the subject. At one time great multitudes were following Him, who were charmed by His words and heard Him gladly. According to all rules of success, this was the opportune moment to gather a great harvest of souls for the kingdom. But instead of making an intense spiritual appeal, Christ turned to the multitude and said: if any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever does not bear his cross, and come after me, he cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sits not down first, and counts the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.... So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsakes not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:26-33.

Psychology would not approve of Christ's method. Instead of striking while the iron was hot, Christ spoke in such a way as to hold many back. It cannot be doubted that His words had a deterring effect, and that He so intended. He could easily have swayed the multitude and brought them to a decision. Instead He cautioned them to think the matter over, to move slowly and count the cost. This must have given the multitude pause. He pictured the cost of following Him in such terms that many must have wondered whether they were ready to pay that cost. He used the same method as He recommended to Gideon of old. (Judges 7:1-8.) He was not after numbers. He would rather have ten who had counted the cost than a hundred who had acted on the spur of the moment. The final result of His lifework, if estimated at the time of His death, was small as compared to the number who had heard Him. But those who followed Him to the end knew where they stood and where they were going; and persecution, hunger, and sword did not intimidate them. They had built their house on a rock.

Our intent in presenting this phase of conversion is to balance the view held by some that turning to God is entirely an emotional experience, induced by passionate pleas to give oneself to God, and that there is nothing for the individual to do but to "yield to God," to have faith, to "sink into God, and all will be well. We do not deny that there is truth in these statements; but they do not present the whole truth. We are, indeed, to yield our will to God; we are to believe; we are to receive the atonement. But there are also other things we must do. Christianity is not merely a sweet song; it is a stern battle, for which we need weapons and armor; it is a fight to the death, and no quarter is given; it is a continual striving against the powers of darkness. Christianity does not consist in negative virtues only. It is positive in action, aggressive, challenging, dynamic, progressive. These manly virtues need to be stressed as much as the more neutral ones. Christ's religion is a balanced one.

Conversion, as far as the decision to turn from evil to good is concerned, can take place in a moment of time, though it is generally the result of long reflection. But the process of conversion is not finished in a moment. It is a day-by-day work, which is best understood as a daily turning away from each temptation which we meet. In this work the Christian is constantly engaged.

The Process of Conversion

In the first stages of conversion there are certain definite steps all must take, and which must not be omitted. These we shall consider briefly.

The man who turns away from sin and turns to God does so because he is tired of sin and knows that there is no hope for him if he continues doing evil. He casts himself upon the mercy of God, and begs forgiveness. This God freely grants him upon repentance. He would have done so long before, but God could not act until man had taken the first step. When the man at last yields, God is enabled to set the whole plan of redemption in operation as far as the man is concerned.

It is to be noted, however, that God does not sit idly back waiting for the man to decide. He is ever at work trying to influence and persuade. The Spirit speaks to him; his conscience reminds him; events in the world urge him; friends plead with him; sickness or sorrow do their work; a sudden miraculous escape speaks loudly; at times God intervenes in dreams of the night; God is everywhere and always at work. His work for a man does not begin at conversion; but man's decision to turn to God is the signal which releases the power of God in his behalf.

It is a fearsome thought that it is possible for puny man to make of none effect God's work for him. All heaven may knock at his heart's door; but no one can enter, no one does enter, until the man gives the signal. It is a most discourteous thing here on earth to fail to open the door for one who knocks. What shall we say, then, when we leave God Himself standing outside, knocking and waiting.

As we turn from sin God's first promise to man becomes effective. I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." Genesis 3:15.

It is as if God should say, "I will put hatred in your heart to sin. I will cause you to hate it." This indeed is the meaning of the text. This hatred is necessary if we are to meet God's standard. It is not enough for us to abstain from sin. We must learn to hate it.

No man is safe so long as he still loves sin. He may shun it; he may not yield to it. But sin lies at the door, ready to spring upon its victim and overcome him at the first opportunity. (Genesis 4:7.) Man's only hope is in so hating sin that it will have no attraction for him. And this hatred God promises to put in the heart.

Man's first step in conversion is therefore the act of turning from sin to God. This turning is the result of being convicted by the Spirit of God that he is a sinner and in need of help. He asks for that help, and receives it. He has now thrown himself upon the mercy of God, and has been received.

Confession

One of the precious promises to which a sinner clings as he comes to God is this: ---If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I John 1:9. He rejoices in a God who not only can but does forgive sins, and cleanses from all unrighteousness. But he also notes the condition upon which sin is forgiven. He finds an if. "If we confess." And suddenly he begins to wonder whether he has confessed all his sins, for God will forgive only as we confess. He begins to search his heart to see whether there are still unconfessed sins.

God never shows a man all his sins at once; that would completely overwhelm him. Little by little, as he can bear it, God reveals to him his shortcomings. This is God's plan, and it is best that it is done this way. Of course, there is little point in God's continuing to reveal to a man his sins unless the man is willing to confess them and put them away. That is why there are still sins in us. And that is why there are some sins that hang on so long. We have not laid aside the sins we know, so why should God reveal more to us?

It is easier to confess some sins than others, but true confession is not easy at any time. It is humiliating to the human heart to confess wrong; and when this wrong has been done against a fellow man and we have to confess to him, it becomes at times very difficult. However, there is no other way to get into correct relation with God.

Some may ask whether we must confess not only to God but to man also. Yes, God requires this. One chief point in confession is to confess to the person we have wronged. And this person may often be an enemy, which makes it so much the harder. But we repeat, there is no other way. We are forgiven only as we confess. Note again the text quoted above: if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive." It does not say that we are to confess to God, nor does it say to man, but only "if we confess." We are always to confess to God, for all sin is primarily against Him. But we are also to confess to man where we have wronged any. That is why the statement is a general one. We are to confess to God always, sometimes to God only, but often times both to God and to man. It would be much easier to confess to God only, for that we can do when we are alone, and it does not expose us to anyone else. But when we are to confess to man, it becomes known what we have done, and that hurts our pride. Of course, the one to whom we confess may not reveal it to anyone else, but we can never be sure. And so we hesitate. But we repeat, there is no other way. We are forgiven only as we confess. This is the condition, and this does not change.

To how many are we to confess? If only one person is concerned, that is the only one with whom we have to deal. Where there are two or more, we must extend the confession to those whom it concerns. In general, as far as the sin is known, so far should the confession reach.

Some make the mistake of confessing to the wrong person. Often ministers are appealed to. This is probably because in the Roman Catholic Church it is obligatory to confess the sins to a priest. We need not say that there is no Biblical warrant for this. God has never asked anyone to confess his sins to a third person who is not concerned. We are to confess to God and to the one we wronged, no more.

Are there not occasions when it is expedient to take counsel with some older person in regard to special problems? Most assuredly. But be careful, exceedingly careful, in such matters. Often more harm than good is done. It is always best that the matter be kept within as small a circle as possible.

There are times when confession to man is impossible. The person concerned may have died or moved away, and the address is unknown. After having done all that can reasonably be expected in finding such person, let there be no further regret, or doubt as to one's standing before God. If we have done all that can be done, leave the matter with God and do not worry.

We would urge upon all the necessity of full confession. There are times when we are tempted to leave out of the confession certain phases which we would rather not reveal. If such are known only to the sinner himself, and if it has not affected others, this may be done. But of this matter we should be very sure. For it is often the secret sin that is the real sin. Let the rule be: full and complete confession. The Bible says, "He that covers his sins shall not prosper, but who confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy." Proverbs 28: 13.

Make the confession specific. A general confession means very little. Do not confess other people's sins. Be careful lest you involve others in your confession. They may indeed be partakers of the sin, but they are to do their own confessing, not you. And lastly, do not delay making the necessary adjustment. The longer a confession is delayed, the harder it becomes to rectify the evil. Hence, be prompt.

Restitution

Restitution is closely allied to confession, and is often included in it. By restitution we mean the obligation to pay back or to make right anything where property is involved. It may, indeed, include other things than property, but this we shall not deal with here.

True confession shows itself in the thoroughness with which efforts are made to undo the evil done. It is of little use to make confession with the mouth but make no effort to correct abuses. If a man has stolen, it is incumbent upon him to pay back that which he has taken, and in addition make amends to the person concerned for the time for which he has been deprived of the property taken. That is, if he has stolen a horse and some months go by before he restores it, it is not enough that he merely bring the horse back to the owner. He must also recompense him for the time the horse was with him and the owner was deprived of its services. After he has done this he has still not atoned for his sin, for he has only given back that which was not his.

Restitution is merely common honesty. As with confession, restitution is not always easy. But there is no other way. Where it is humanly possible there must be restitution, first to the one wronged; if this is impossible, then to the heirs as far as they are involved; if neither can be done, then to God. Every effort must be made to restore, but after this has been done let there be no more lingering regret. All that can be done has been done, and there must the matter rest.

It should be kept in mind that neither confession nor restitution absolves a person from the consequences of his transgression. That is, God may and will forgive, but the punishment for the sin is not thereby remitted. Here some make a mistake. They think that when they have confessed their sin and have made restitution, they should be spared the punishment. But this cannot be. What a man sows, that he shall also reap. By his sins he may have set in motion forces that continue to operate, whether he confesses or not. And he must take the responsibility for that. It is well to have this in mind. A man may transgress and bring sickness to himself, or disaster. God may forgive, but the consequences remain; and only under special circumstances will God interfere with the ordinary workings of the laws of retribution.

Knowledge of Sin

"BY the law is the knowledge of sin." Romans 3:20. This verse is variously interpreted: "discovering of sin"; "clear and exact knowledge of sin"; "detect and bring to light sin"; "recognition, discovery, lively knowledge of sin"; "a spiritual consciousness of sin, a personal conviction of it."

The setting of the text makes it clear that although men may have a general knowledge of sin, the law gives a more lively and complete knowledge of sin. All men, Christian and heathen alike, have some knowledge of sin. Even those low in the scale of intelligence have some perception of what ought and what ought not to be done. But this knowledge is incomplete, and leaves to the judgment of man the decisions of the right or the wrong of a matter in dispute.

The law supplies that which man is not given by nature or intuition. In the absence of law man is likely to condone himself for doing that of which others disapprove, and were there no standard to which men might appeal, there would be little agreement on many points as to just what constitutes sinfulness.

To make clear the distinction between right and wrong, God gave the law. Paul says that he would not have known sin except by the law. (Romans 7:7.) It gave him a lively knowledge of sin, a spiritual consciousness of it, and it convicted him.

Spirit and Conscience

The Spirit works in close connection with the law. Even as the law convicts of sin, so does the Spirit. "When he is come, he will reprove ["convince," margin] the world of sin." John 16:8. This is the very thing which the law does also. It points out sin, makes it clear and convincing. The Spirit makes the application to the heart, and says, "Thou art the man." Together the two do a perfect work. They point out sin, and bring the truth home to the heart.

In this work the Spirit has a helper in the conscience. "The answer of a good conscience" is a precious gift of God. I Peter 3:21. As the Christian reads his Bible and finds therein reproof for himself, he will in all humility accept the correction and thank God that He has shown him wherein he should change his ways. This agreement of the human spirit with the revealed Word of God is the

answer of a good conscience. He may not have been aware that he was transgressing. Now he finds out the will of God, and immediately he concurs. His spirit witnesses with God's Spirit, and all is well.

Conscience is a tender plant that needs to be nurtured carefully. Originally given to man to function in the spiritual realm as taste is in the physical, it has been abused and mistreated until it has almost ceased to operate in many cases. From being a safe guide it has with some degenerated so that it leads astray, as taste leads astray when it is perverted. But conscience, if tenderly nursed, may be brought back to normal, or near normal, and again function as God intended it to. But this takes care and time, and conscience must constantly be compared with the Word to make sure that the two agree.

Any deviation must be carefully noted and proper correction made. Strange to say, some, when they find that their conscience does not agree with the Word, are ready to regulate the Word rather than the conscience. This is surely a turning of things upside down.

All this has a definite bearing on conversion, for a man may start well, and then suddenly halt in the progress he is making toward the kingdom. He finds himself at variance with the law, and is tempted to follow his own feelings rather than the law of God, not knowing that "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God." Romans 8:7. Thus he faces a spiritual crisis. He has come a long way, and is nearing the kingdom. Which way shall he take now? The law of God points the way definitely, but he wants to go another. Shall he follow the Word, or shall he turn away? On the answer to this question hangs his further progress in the way of God. Therefore, a vital decision for each young Christian to make is that of following the light as it shines on the pathway, follow God wherever He may lead, and accept His definition of right and wrong instead of trusting to his own understanding.

Faith

To many, faith is intangible. They have heard it used by Christians in such a way as to give the impression that faith requires us to believe the unbelievable, that it is opposed to reason, that it is something to be swallowed and no questions asked. But this is not the Biblical or the true view. Yet many believe it to be, and whenever they are confronted with a question which they do not understand, they answer unthinkingly, 'We will have to take that by faith.' This expression generally stops all investigation, all research, all reasoning. Instead of applying their minds to the problem, as God intended they should, they substitute blind faith for thinking, and are prone to judge those who investigate a little further as impious souls who are prying into the secrets of God.

"Have faith in God." Mark 11:22. Let us think of faith in the sense in which we apply it when we say that we have faith in a certain man or in an institution or in a movement. Such faith is not blind faith but faith based on investigation, on past performance, on the character of the individual.

I need an operation, and find a skillful and reliable surgeon. I inquire of those upon whom he has operated, and am satisfied as to his competence. I am ready to let him do my work. I have faith in him, faith based on evidence, on fact, on performance.

This is the kind of faith of which Hebrews says, 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' Hebrews 11:1. For "substance" the margin has "ground, or confidence"; that is, faith grounded in confidence; and this confidence is what I build on. The Greek word here means "that which stands under, as a foundation, that which may be built on." This faith is not an unreasoned belief but one grounded in past accomplishment, something on which one may safely build.

Faith, instead of being something ephemeral, is that upon which the whole social fabric is built. It is not only true that without faith it is impossible to please God, but it is also impossible to live with man or carry on any kind of activity. Those who say that they have no faith in faith, do not appreciate what they are saying or where it will lead them. Those who affirm that they have no faith in anybody, that they will believe only what they see, have not thought very deeply or far. Such a proposition is completely impossible.

I order a bill of goods, and in due time I receive it and send payment for same. It is a transaction of faith. The merchant has faith, and I have. Another merchant having less faith demands payment beforehand or on delivery. I send for the goods, and pay the postman the required sum. The merchant had no faith in me, but now he must have faith in the postman and the postal service. I go to the bank to have a check cashed. The banker demands identification, and I satisfy him, and get the money. This is also an act of faith. If I were absolutely without faith, I would not hand the check over till I had the money, and the banker would not hand me the money till he had the check. Without faith the transaction would stop right there. This is an extreme case, but it illustrates the point that life without faith would be impossible.

Without faith I would not dare to eat the bread I buy; it might be poisoned. I would not stay in the house I am in; it might cave in. I would have no faith in the sign on the streetcar that tells the destination; it probably does not tell the truth. I would not accept the money for my day's work; it may be counterfeit. A life without faith is an impossibility. Those who reject faith reject life.

If we thus are dependent on faith every day of our lives, is there anything unreasonable in God's requirement that we have faith in Him? We have faith in everybody else, at least to a certain extent. Is God the only one we are to mistrust? "Have faith in God," is a most reasonable request. This is not a fanciful faith, but one grounded on evidence. The sun and the moon are His faithful witnesses; they fail not. He sends rain from heaven and the seasons change not. He can be trusted. Have faith in God.

Faith is one of the prime essentials of a new convert as well as for the older believer. "Without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Hebrews 11: 6.

Two things are here spoken of which it is necessary to believe: First, we are to believe that God is; that is, that He exists. This speaks of God as a personal being. We are to have faith not in a mighty power or influence but in a person. This rules out evolution and kindred theories which either eliminate God entirely or else think of Him as an impersonal force who pervades the universe.

Second, we are to believe that God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him; that is, that God is not indifferent to what we do, that He has a standard by which He judges and rewards, and that He cares whether we serve Him. This presents to us God not merely as a person, but as a moral Being who keeps an account with mankind, notices those that serve Him with diligence, and rewards them, thus calling our attention to the future and to the reward.

These requirements would seem to be the minimum requirements that God could ask of any. And they are reasonable ones. How could any serve a God who he does not believe exists, and why should he serve One who is morally indifferent, who does not care whether men worship or not?

The true Christian is a man of faith; he has faith in God, faith in the eventual triumph of right, faith in goodness, faith in his fellow men, faith in virtue as opposed to vice, and faith that God will reward them that diligently seek Him.

A man of faith is a man of courage and of hope. He is not downcast, but cheerful, not pessimistic or discontent. He looks with confidence to the future, he knows that God lives and reigns, and that in the end all will come out well. He has faith in God, faith that his sins are forgiven, faith that God, who has led him thus far, will lead him to the end. Such a man is unconquerable. Reverses will not discourage him; opposition will not deter him; hope will not desert him. He has faith, and the man who has faith will never succumb. This is the kind of man that pleases God; this is the kind we ought to be.

Personal Witness

God requires that those for whom He has done great things give Him the glory. This also is a most reasonable request. He does not ask for glory for His own sake; that would be unworthy of Him or of anyone else. He simply asks that the man whose sins are forgiven tell his fellowmen of the great things God has done for him, that others may be encouraged to come to God also. God needs men to demonstrate what He can do. As a salesman displays his wares that the purchaser may examine the workmanship and choose according to his estimate of the quality of the goods on exhibition, so God displays His workmanship as it is revealed in those who have yielded to His will.

The salesman who arrives in a town to sell what he claims to be a remarkable article, but has no samples along, will not make much impression upon prospective buyers. He may describe his article in glowing terms; he may enlarge upon its virtue and what it can do and how useful it is. But all these will be empty words if he does not have a sample that can be examined and demonstrated. There will be no desire on the part of the buyers to invest in something they have not seen in operation. Their reasonable demand would be: Bring your article along. Let us see what it is made of and how it functions. Give us a chance to examine it. But don't expect us to buy without knowing any more than what you tell us.

Who can object to such reasoning? And so God wants a few samples of what He can do; and these samples will be of much more value than any number of words. That is why God desires us to witness for Him. That is why we are made a spectacle to God and to men. That, also, is how we can be co-workers with God and do real service for humanity.

But samples, in order to accomplish their purpose, must be capable of being examined and subjected to tests. The careful buyer will not be satisfied with merely looking at them from a distance. He will want to make personal investigation to satisfy himself as to the truths of the claims made. Only after he has thus satisfied himself will he be ready to place his order.

Making a spiritual application of this, it becomes evident that God must necessarily permit His people to be tried to demonstrate how they will react under various conditions. And on these tests depend the success of God's attempt to persuade men to accept Him. It is therefore of supreme importance that we demonstrate to men the power of God in the individual life to overcome sin, to live holy lives in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, to show forth the graces of Him who has called us from darkness to His wonderful light. If we fail in the test, the failure is great. For not only do we suffer loss ourselves but others, looking at our failure, will taunt God and declare His claims untrue.

These considerations place a great responsibility upon everyone who names the name of Christ. God wants us to be His witnesses, and He wants us to testify to the truth. On our testimony hangs the decision of many. Men are watching to see what these witnesses will do, if they have any advantage over others in adjustment to life. Unless these witnesses by words and deeds can present proof of the superiority of Christianity, there is little hope that any will be convinced.

Witnessing for Christ means more than standing up in meeting and confessing Christ. This indeed is included, but the real witnessing is done by living rather than by speaking. "The life was the light of men." John 1:4. This was the case with Christ, and it is to be the same with us. When Christians are said to be lights in the world, it has reference to the life. The life man lives is the real light.

Witnessing for Christ includes the public recognition of changed relations as demonstrated in baptism. This rite is notice to all that a soul has torn himself away from the world, died to sin, and united himself to Christ. The Bible emphasizes baptism as a necessary ordinance when it says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." Mark 16:16. "He that believes and is baptized." Not "he that believes" only. Faith is necessary, but here Christ adds baptism. We would not dare change this requirement. God speaks, and the believing soul obeys.

Sanctification

The false popular teaching on sanctification has done much harm in the world. It has brought reproach to the church of God, and turned many away from the truth. For this reason it behooves us to study what the Bible teaches on this subject, that we may relate ourselves aright to this important Bible truth.

Sanctification is another name for holiness. Of this the Scripture says, “Dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” 2 Corinthians 7: 1. “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” Hebrews 12:14. “Yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.” Romans 6:19.

The word holiness is related to wholeness, and denotes the giving over of oneself entirely to God. Sanctification is complete dedication to God, set apart for consecrated use. The words holiness and sanctification are used interchangeably, and both refer to complete surrender to God, complete dedication.

No person is completely sanctified in a moment's time. It is a lifework, and means a daily surrender to God and a daily receiving from Him of power necessary for the day's task.

In the texts quoted above we would call attention to two phrases which are of importance: “perfecting holiness” and “righteousness unto sanctification.” Both of these intimate that there is a progression in holiness, that holiness is capable of being perfected, and that righteousness is unto sanctification.

Upon conversion a man is forgiven all his sin and is counted righteous in the sight of God. He may not have overcome on all points as yet, but he is on the way, and God gives him credit for having done that which he intends to do. His righteousness is one of faith. He has not attained, but God counts his faith for righteousness. This is ordinarily spoken of as righteousness by faith.

This is all God requires of a beginner, but more than this is embraced in God's plan of redemption. He wants the man to begin to perfect holiness in the fear of God. As the man gains the victory over one sin, he advances one step toward the goal set for him. Next day he gains another victory, and another, and another. Of this Paul exclaims, “Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 15:57. Thus it is the privilege of the Christian to gain daily victories over sin and the devil. And all the time he is advancing, but has not yet reached perfection. This Paul notes when he says, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after.” Philippians 3:12. Paul declares that he was not perfect; yet note what he says in verse 15: “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.” Here he states that he and others are perfect, though in the same chapter he declares that he is not perfect! How is this to be understood? How could Paul be perfect and imperfect at the same time?

Saints

When Paul wrote to the brethren in Corinth he addressed them as sanctified and saints. (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1.) In Hebrews the saints are called “holy brethren.” (Hebrews 3.1) From the reading of these epistles, however, we do not get the idea that these church members were perfect. Quite the contrary, they needed reproof-and Paul administered it and yet they are called saints.

The solution is simple. There are various stages of perfection and sanctification. A green apple may be perfect in every particular as a green apple. But it is not done growing, and after a while it will reach a greater state of perfection. A child may be perfect as a child. But it has not yet attained to full growth. And so Paul admonishes those whom he has just called perfect, “whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.” Philippians 3:16. Note: “Whereto we have already attained”-as far as we have come, at the point where we now are. God wants His people to be perfect, holy, sanctified. This does not mean that we here and now have reached that state. Paul said he had not, but he followed after; that is, he was pressing toward the mark of the high calling in Christ Jesus. But as far as he had come he was perfect. His heart was right toward God, and he was walking in the light. And though he could not claim perfection he was following after.

Sanctification, therefore, must be a progressive work, a daily work, finished not in a day or a year. The eventual goal is absolute perfection as far as it is possible for human beings to be or become perfect. God is the only perfect being in the universe, and as He is perfect in His sphere, so we are to be in ours. It is to this high calling Paul invites all when he says, “Let us therefore . . . be thus minded.” Philippians 3:15.

Some may object to this, and state that God's requirement is absolute perfection, and that unless we are a hundred per cent Christians we are no Christians at all. I have heard ministers proclaim this doctrine from the pulpit, thereby causing much discouragement. Let a young person believe this, and he will fall into deep despondency when he finds out that he is not perfect, that he has sinned, and hence is not a Christian. It takes weeks and months to restore such a one and get him to believe the Bible statement, “Little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not, and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” 1 John 2: 1. Having been taught that if he sinned after having made a high profession, there was little hope for him, and knowing that he would probably sin again, he might as well give up now as later.

What, then, is the true Biblical teaching of sanctification? It is contained in the verse before us: “Little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not.” This has been God's message through the ages. It was so in the Old Testament times, and it is so in the New. There is no greater message than this. God has made provision for such as come short, but the first and chief message is, “Sin not.” This was what the prophet Samuel proclaimed when he said, “To obey is better than sacrifice.” 1 Samuel 15:22. This was what Jesus announced when He told the woman, “Go, and sin no more.” John 8: 11. And this is what the apostle John says in the text before us, “Sin not.” Throughout the ages this has been the message of God's true messengers, and that message has never changed.

Is it possible to live up to this high calling? The God who asks us to do this will supply the power for its performance. It is wonderful to have our sins forgiven, and it is wonderful to know that if we sin, we still have an advocate with the Father. But it should be known to all that the power of the gospel is not exhausted in the forgiveness of sin. There is a higher power at the disposal of all, a power to keep from sinning, a power higher and greater than that of forgiveness. And this power God is anxious to impart.

To live above sin is the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And that is the privilege of every Christian. Christ has provided power, sufficient, abundant for every need. He is able not only to forgive sin but to keep us from falling. (Jude 24.) And this keeping power is the highest demonstration God can give of the power available for man.

“Go, and sin no more.” John 8: 11. This was the command to the woman who had been caught in sin. And God never gives a command which it is impossible to obey. We therefore take it for granted that it is possible to live above sin. This does not mean only that we sin and are forgiven. It means that we do not sin, that God keeps us from sinning.

Most people find that they are not able to come to grips with all sin at once, but must take one sin at a time. This does not mean that they tolerate sin at any time, but it does mean that they concentrate on this or that particular weakness until they overcome it. There are others who believe that they are able to confront the whole body of evil at one time and come off victorious. Let each find out for himself the best procedure. But be sure of this: Never let a day go by without making some definite advance.

This is the way of sanctification. Decide by the grace of God that this day you will gain the victory over some besetting evil; then keep at this thing until you stand clear in Christ Jesus. At times it will appear that you are not making much progress, but do not be discouraged. God is with you, and victory will come.

Prayer

Prayer is discussed elsewhere, so not much needs to be said here. But it should ever be had in mind that victory over sin does not come without much wrestling with God in the night watches. A life of victory is a life of prayer. The soul who would reach God's standard will not fail to keep close to Him. Prayer subdues the soul, subdues the passions, and vanquishes the enemy.

10. Jesus' Teaching About Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

IT CAME to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” Luke 11:1

Jesus' prayers must have made a deep impression upon the disciples. We are not told in this particular instance what Jesus' prayer was about or what He said, but when He was done the disciples wanted Him to teach them to pray. They evidently did not feel that their prayers were effective, or that they knew how to address God. Or it may be, as is likely, that Jesus prayed as they had never heard prayer before, and they wanted to learn. And so Jesus taught them.

“When thou prays, thou shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prays, enter into thy closet, and when thou has shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which sees in secret shall reward thee openly. But when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not you therefore like unto them: for your Father know what things you have need of, before you ask him. After this manner therefore pray you: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for your is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.” Matthew 6:5-13.

True Prayer

These verses contain much that is valuable for the one who wishes to learn to pray. First of all, we are not to pray to be seen of men. Those that do this “have their reward,” that is, men admire them, and that is all the reward they will get. Instead of standing on a street corner praying to be seen of men, we are to enter into our closet, close the door, and pray to the 'Father which sees in secret.' If we do this, we shall be rewarded openly.

Neither are we to use vain repetitions as the heathen do, who believe that they will be heard for their much speaking. God knows what we have need of before we speak, so it is not necessary to inform Him at length about our needs. When we pray we are to tell God in simple language just what we need, “after this manner.” This expression has reference to the Lord's prayer.

How simple this prayer is! It is not elaborate or extravagant -first the opening address, “Our Father which art in heaven,” then seven short petitions, and then the closing statement: “For your is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”

This is not the only prayer Christ wishes us to pray; but Jesus here gives us an ideal prayer. We are to pray “after this manner.” If we do, our public prayers will be short, pithy, pointed. They will not be orations to be heard of men, they will not be informative lectures on the state of the world, they will not be appeals to a God who needs to be reminded of His duty; they will be simple petitions of a soul in need of temporal and spiritual blessings, and they will ascribe power and glory to the One whose is the kingdom.

Seven Petitions

Let us briefly recount the seven petitions in this prayer. “Hallowed be thy name.” Hallowed means “sacred.” We are not to take the name of the Lord in vain. We are to keep it sacred and use it reverently. Without reverence there can be no true worship. There must be reverence in the church, reverence in the soul, reverence at the very thought of God, if we are to receive any benefit from prayer. Reverence is of prime importance and is rightly the first petition.

“Thy kingdom come.” The kingdom here mentioned is the kingdom in the hearts of men and also the kingdom of glory. It is a prayer that the day may speedily come when God shall be King indeed, both in the individual life and in the kingdom which is to be revealed when He shall come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (Matthew 25:30)

“Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” God’s will is not now being done in earth. Christ wants it done. He asks us to pray that it may be done.

God’s will is contained in the Ten Commandments. “Thou shall,” “Thou shall not,” the commandments read. If any want to know God’s will that he may do it, he should begin with the Ten Commandments. There is food there, and study, for the soul. We shall never come to the point where we may with safety disregard God’s will. Rather, we are to pray that it may be done in earth as in heaven. This must first of all mean in our own hearts.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” We are to recognize that every good and perfect gift is from above, and that even for our daily bread we are dependent upon the blessing of God from heaven. As we thank God for spiritual blessings, so we should thank Him for daily bread.

Deep, true thankfulness should pervade our lives. It is putting a narrow interpretation on the Word to limit our thankfulness to certain of God’s gifts only. We understand that this commandment enjoins thankfulness for all God’s gifts and that a feeling of appreciation and joy for God’s blessings should characterize us.

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” God does not promise to forgive us our sins unless we show a forgiving spirit to others. If we wish to be forgiven, we must forgive others when they trespass against us. This is the condition of forgiveness. We may therefore rest assured that if we are holding a grudge in our hearts, if we show an unforgiving spirit, our own sins are not forgiven. This should cause us to do some serious thinking.

“And lead us not into temptation.” God will not permit us to be tempted above that which we are able to bear. He will temper the temptation according to our strength. Temptations will come; they must come. We are to trust God and ask Him to give us the needed help for daily living.

But deliver us from evil.” There is no strength in us to stand the trials that come to us from day to day. We need help; we need deliverance. Evil will overtake us, the evil one will gain the victory unless we get help from God. This prayer recognizes our need of help and asks God for it. This is the last of the seven petitions. After this comes the closing statement ascribing power and glory to God.

Thus reads the Lord’s prayer. In it we acknowledge God as our Father, the One to whom belong all things, and to whom we must address our petition. This prayer inculcates reverence for God, desire for the coming of the kingdom, submission to the will of God, recognition of our temporal needs, reciprocity of forgiveness, need for help in temptation and deliverance from evil. It recognizes and provides for every human need, temporal and spiritual. It is a model and type of what our prayers should be.

It is well that we teach our children this prayer. It is well that we learn it ourselves. It is well that all our prayers be modeled after it, and that the same spirit as is exhibited here pervade our every petition. This is pleasing to God and in harmony with His will. We should be careful, however, that our prayers do not become mere repetitions of certain words and phrases. They should be personal, sincere, heartfelt.

Importunate Prayer

It was immediately after Jesus had given this ideal prayer that He spoke a parable dealing with importunate prayer. “Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him, And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needs. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.” Luke 11:5-10.

This parable teaches by way of contrast what God is not. Though we are to be constant in prayer, we are not to believe that we get what we ask for merely because we keep on asking. The householder got what he asked, because of his importunity. The lesson is that God does not have a character like that. He is willing and anxious to give, in direct contrast to the “friend” in the parable.

But this parable teaches more than the character of God. Too many of our prayers are for ourselves and our own needs. We ask God for this or that thing. When we pray for others it is often only a petition for God to help certain ones. It is not often that we ask God to help us to help someone else. This is what the householder asked in the parable. He asked for the loan of three loaves. He did not need these for himself; he asked for a friend of his.

The householder could have told the wayfarer that he had no bread in the house. That would have been the truth. He could have said that it would be of little use to go to a neighbor, for it was late and the neighbor had already gone to bed. When he did go, and the neighbor refused to get up out of bed, he could easily have excused himself by saying that he had now done all that he could. But he did not stop at this. He importuned the neighbor until at last he got up and gave him what he desired. And all this was at cost to himself. He borrowed the loaves and would have to pay them back.

Here, then, we have a man who is willing to go to great lengths to help a friend. He discommodes himself; he is willing to pay for the privilege of helping his friend; he rouses others who are not very willing to get up; all for the sake of one who is on a journey. He shows that he is willing to do everything in his power to help.

How different this is from the man who prays for the heathen afar off, but does not do anything in a practical way to answer his own prayer. It is of little use to ask God to bless others, unless we are willing to be used in conveying the blessing to them, unless

we are willing to discommode ourselves for their sake, unless we are willing to help pay the bill. It is easy to ask God to bless someone and to conclude that having done this, we have done our duty; for have we not prayed for him? But prayer is more than saying some words. If we are in earnest we shall back our prayer with action. We shall be willing to dig down into our pockets and give; we shall be willing to go to personal inconvenience to help; we shall be willing to go on unpleasant errands; we shall be willing to persist after being refused. We shall not be denied, but shall keep working until we accomplish our end. All this is included in real prayer for others.

We have here a measuring stick by which to gauge our concern for the salvation of others, and the worth of our prayers for them. "God, help the poor heathen," we pray, and then we put a penny in the collection box. "God, help the poor heathen," we pray, and at the same time we think that the missionaries are wasting their time and precious talents when there is so much to be done at home. We pray for the heathen, but are not willing to discommode ourselves to help them.

But it is not the heathen alone who are being prayed for in the manner described. We are too prone to confuse prayer with a pious wish, and pray for everybody in general while we are doing very little for anyone in particular. Prayer, to be effective, must be accompanied by works. Otherwise it abides alone.

The Unjust judge

In the parable of the unjust judge, Christ again by contrast shows what God is not, and also teaches other precious lessons. The parable was primarily given to teach that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

"He spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:1-8.

The word avenge has nothing to do with revenge, but is an appeal for justice. Having lost her husband, the widow had been taken advantage of, and now wanted justice done. The judge was a hard man, who feared neither God nor man, and for a while would do nothing for her. Then, because she troubled him and he wearied of it, he at last granted her petition and gave her justice. She had worn him out. She got what she wanted, not because of any change in the judge's attitude toward her case, but simply that he might be rid of her continual coming. She wearied him, and he gave her justice because she troubled him.

The first lesson Christ wants us to learn is that if it is possible to get justice from a man who is unjust by the simple expedient of troubling him, should it not be much easier to get justice from God, who is willing to help and eager to avenge us of our adversary? He wants us to know that God is eager to come to our rescue; and that if He delays, it is not for the reason which the unjust judge had.

Is it true that at times we pray and God does not seem to hear? We admit that this is the case. Are we to keep on praying? Yes, the parable was given to teach that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. But what if we pray and God does not seem to hear? Keep on praying. Only remember that if God does not answer immediately, it is not because He is like the unjust judge. He may not answer immediately, but if He does not, there is good reason for it; and the reason is not the same as that of the unjust judge. God is eager to help, and will do so at the first opportunity. In the meantime we are not to give up. God has heard our prayer. He is even now "working on the case." Be patient. Keep on praying. God is doing all that can be done, and in due time the answer will come. God has not forgotten us.

Whereas the first lesson of the parable is that we are not to think that God is like the unjust judge, the most important lesson is perhaps that we are to be patient if our prayers are not answered immediately. We are to have faith in God that He has good reasons for not answering us, which He thinks best not to reveal at the time. This is a most important lesson and one which must be learned if we are to have a successful Christian experience.

Why God Does Not Answer

What are some of the reasons for God's not answering our prayers immediately? There are several, among them these: Suppose we are praying for the conversion of some dear friend. We have prayed a month, a year, ten years, and God has not answered our prayer. What is the reason?

There are some things God cannot do because He has limited Himself. God cannot, and does not, compel a man to serve Him against his will. When we pray God to convert a man, we are asking Him to do something which He cannot do of Himself. God does not take a man by the neck and make him do His will. That would be violating the very principles on which the gospel is founded. The free exercise of the will is the most precious right which God has given to man, and God Himself respects it. He could not violate it and be God. We are therefore asking God to do the impossible if we ask Him to convert a man and expect Him to use force in bringing the conversion about. God cannot do this.

What, then, can God do when such a request is presented to Him? What, specifically, can He do that He is not already doing? Much in every way, if - and note this if - if we are willing to cooperate with Him. God has not given to angels the work of preaching the gospel. There are many things which angels can do, but this is not their work. It is reserved for man; for man alone has in his own experience felt not only the power of sin but the greater power of salvation from sin. Man can help man as the angels cannot, even if they were given permission to help. God is therefore handicapped until He gets a man to cooperate with Him. Not until then can He work in earnest.

When you therefore pray for the conversion of a person, God has at last someone who is interested in the same person He has been interested in for a long time. That someone is you. You prayed for the person. Are you enough interested in him to do something? If you are not, your prayer is not honest. But if you are willing to do your share, God will immediately set you to work. As you think, as you meditate, as you seek for ways to reach the person for whom you have prayed, God will help, God will advise, God will put means at your disposal that will aid you, angels will minister as they could not do before, all the resources of heaven are at your command. You are a laborer “together with God.” You two are working and planning together for the salvation of its soul. You are not merely working for God; you are working with God. The difference is vital.

Thus effective prayer forms a partnership between the one who prays and God. As truly as two friends may counsel together, so may God and a praying person have communion. They have a common objective; they are working for the same end. And with the unlimited resources of God at man's disposal, all that can be done is being done. If the person prayed for will not yield, God Himself can do nothing. A person that will be lost will at last have his way.

Some Misapprehensions

There are some misapprehensions of God's method of work that should have consideration. When I say that God does not force the will of anyone, I am stating the truth. But some draw from this the conclusion that God does not use any means of coercion at all, that He sits afar off unconcerned, and that if a man will turn to Him, good and well; but if he will not, God has no further responsibility. This impression should be corrected.

God is vitally interested in the conversion of every man and woman on the face of the earth. He wills not that any shall perish, but that all shall come to repentance and have everlasting life. He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, and He still loves the world and every man in it to the extent that there is nothing short of the final forcing of the will which He will not do to save a man. He will correct; He will punish; He will hedge up one way and open another; He will do everything short of final compulsion. When at last a man is lost God cannot be blamed for the loss. It can never be said that God did not do all that was possible to save him. God does not want anyone at the last day to say to Him: if you had taken me in hand, if you had punished me severely and even unmercifully, perhaps I would have come to my senses. You did not do this. You were not hard enough on me. Now I am lost. If you had really chastised me, I should have repented.”

No man will be able to say this to God, for God will have done all that can be done to save him. God does that for everybody. When a man dies, God's conscience - I say it reverently - is clear. There is nothing that could be done that He has not done. "What could have been done more to my vineyard," says God, "that I have not done in it?" Isaiah 5:4. But Israel "received no correction." Jeremiah 2:30. It was of no use to add more punishment. "Why should you be stricken any more?" God asks. "You will revolt more and more." Isaiah 1: 5.

There are persons who feel that if their parents had taken them in hand when they were children, they would have saved them many struggles in later life. But they were permitted to have their own way, and when they grew up had tempers to contend with and battles to fight from which they could have been saved had the parents done their duty by correcting them and training them in youth.

God does not want to be put in the position of not having done everything possible to save a man, not because He does not wish to be blamed, but because of His love for man. God does not want any to perish. He loves men too much for that. If there is any way of saving them, God will do it. If at last they are lost, it is because they do not wish to be saved, and despite all that God can do for them.

Pharaoh's Case

An interesting illustration of God's dealings with men is found in the case of Pharaoh. Ordinarily there is no purpose in God's prolonging a man's life after he has definitely and finally decided that he will not do right, that he will not be saved. God had done all he could for Pharaoh, yet He prolonged his life for a definite purpose. In him He gave a demonstration of the fact that after a man has decided against God, there is nothing that God can do that will bring about his conversion. When he has settled his own case God can do no more.

Pharaoh had been given great light, and he had sinned against it. Ordinarily he would have been “cut off”; but for the purpose of demonstration God let him stand, to show in him His power. (Exodus 9:15, 16. See margin.) The American Revised Version says, “Now I had put forth my hand, and smitten thee and thy people with pestilence, and thou had been cut off from the earth. But in very deed for this cause have I made thee to stand, to show thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.” Exodus 9:15,16.

Ordinarily Pharaoh would have been “cut off,” but God prolonged his life to show that after a man has made his final decision, nothing that God or man can do will accomplish anything toward his salvation. His heart is hardened, no impression can be made on it, and he is beyond salvation. God can punish him with plagues. That only hardens him the more. God can make appeal after appeal, but he is deaf to all such. God can take his dearest, his first-born. That makes no impression. All these things only harden him the more. It were better that he were dead.

This case, therefore, justifies God's dealings with men. God was ready to “cut off” Pharaoh; God would have done so had He not decided to let him “stand” for a demonstration. The question at issue was really this: Had God done all that could be done for Pharaoh, or might further punishment bring him to his senses? God, of course, knew that He had done all that could be done, and further punishment would only harden his heart. This was proved by the events that followed. No punishment that God could bring to bear upon Pharaoh had any effect on him. God stood vindicated.

The discussion thus far has shown us that when one prays God has an opportunity to do what He could not do before, that is, if the one who prays will cooperate with God- But if the person only prays and refuses to cooperate, either from unwillingness or from lack of knowledge of what is required of him, then all that God can do is to wait. Perhaps the prayer is not in earnest. Perhaps his is only one of the conventional prayers that sound good but are not founded in a faith that works. God can do very little with such a prayer.

Man's failure to cooperate with God is one reason why He cannot answer all prayers. The parable of the unjust judge teaches us that if our prayers are not answered immediately, we are not to think that the reason is lack of interest on God's part. The parable assures us that God is vitally interested in His own that cry to Him day and night. When the answer is delayed we are to search our hearts to see whether the fault is in us. It may be that God wants us to do something, and that He is waiting for us to do our part.

Habakkuk's Experience

The prophet Habakkuk had an experience which is recorded for our benefit. He was living in the days immediately preceding the Babylonian captivity, when wickedness abounded and prospered. God had denounced the evil practices of the people and had threatened punishment. But so far, little had been done. Habakkuk felt that God was too slow, that something should have been done long before, and that because nothing had been done, the law was slack, and conditions generally were unsatisfactory. He felt, as is expressed in the parable of the unjust judge, that God had borne long, too long, with them, or as the margin in the American Revised Version puts it, God was "slow to punish on their behalf." Luke 18:7.

Habakkuk was impatient with God. He had already called the matter to God's attention several times, and yet nothing had been done. "O Lord," he said, "how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! Why does thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention Therefore the law is slack, and judgment does never go forth: for the wicked does compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceeds." Habakkuk 1:2-4.

He was taking God to task. "O Lord, how long shall I cry." This really means: 'Lord, I have mentioned this several times, but nothing has been done about it. How many more times will I have to speak before action is taken? The law is held in contempt, the wicked take advantage of the righteous and justice is perverted. All this is because prompt action is not forthcoming.'

When God answered him Habakkuk was not yet satisfied. Once more he took God to task. 'Wherefore looks thou upon them that deal treacherously, and held thy tongue when the wicked devours the man that is more righteous than he? And makes men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them? They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag; therefore they rejoice and are glad.' Habakkuk 1:13-15.

Habakkuk did not approve of God's knowing all the evil that was going on and doing nothing about it. He did not understand how God could hold His tongue "when the wicked devours the man that is more righteous than he." Verse 13. Did not some men catch others in their net and laugh at them when they were caught? (Verse 15.) God saw all this, and still did nothing. If Habakkuk were God, he would do differently.

To this reproof God quietly answered that He was doing something. Not only was He doing something, but He was doing all that could be done under the circumstances. However, He told Habakkuk that men would not believe it though it were told them. The Chaldeans are coming, God said, "that bitter and hasty nation." They shall---march through the breadth of the land.... They are terrible and dreadful." Habakkuk 1:6, 7. "From them shall proceed the judgment of these, and the captivity of these." Verse 7, margin.

God had matters well in hand in the days of Habakkuk, but the prophet did not think so. He was impatient with God, for it seemed to him that God was very slow. A hundred years before this, Israel had been taken captive because of their sins, and now Judah was worse than Israel had ever been, and yet God was inactive. If we accept Ussher's chronology, twenty years were to elapse before the Chaldeans came to punish Judah. Habakkuk could not wait that long. He was in favor of immediate action.

Thus it is with men today. Some think that God is slack. Even Christians are of the same opinion. They pray for something, and want immediate action. They do not consider that God Himself must wait until men are ready, and that He can do very little to hasten the process. If prayers therefore are not answered immediately, know that God is doing all that can be done, and that He "is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9. There are many factors involved in answer to prayer, and we must not become impatient if immediate results are not forthcoming, nor must we think that God is indifferent or slack. Every moment God is doing all that can be done. It may not be any more apparent now than in the days of Habakkuk, but God asks us to trust Him.

The Pharisee and the Publican

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted." Luke 18:10-14.

This parable brings to view two men: one whose prayer was heard and one whose prayer was not heard. As Christ never said or did anything without a purpose, we may expect to find light in this parable on why some prayers are heard, and why others are not.

"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself." We have no reason to believe that the Pharisee was not an honorable man. Many of his kind were, and if they were living today, some of them would hold honorable positions in the church. This man, according to his own statement, was not an extortioner, an unjust man, or an adulterer. He gave himself a good recommendation, and

others might have done the same. He was sure that he was better than “this publican.” According to himself his goodness was not all negative. He fasted twice a week; he paid tithe of all he possessed. This should count some in the scale of judgment. In fact, as he stood and prayed with himself he was quite satisfied that his record would stand investigation. If he had thought that God needed more proof of his goodness, he could probably have provided it. He went away satisfied with himself. He had made a good impression upon God.

Not so with the publican. He would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote himself on his breast and prayed, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Had the Pharisee heard him, he would have wondered how a man with so little to recommend him could ever expect to obtain God's favor. The Pharisee had a list of good deeds, but as for “this publican,” there was not much hope for him. With what astonishment must the Pharisees have heard Christ's evaluation of their worship. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.”

What was it that made the prayer of the Pharisee unacceptable in the sight of God? Christ gives the key to this when He says, “Every one that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.” Luke 18:14.

Pride and Self-righteousness

Among all sins pride and self-righteousness are most displeasing to God. In fact, they are among the sins that are most hopeless and incurable. They are hard to eradicate, chiefly because they are not considered very sinful, and in many respects are even thought fashionable. They are very prevalent, and are found among church members as well as among worldlings. They are at once popular and widespread. They are insidious and destructive of spirituality. They poison the very fountain of life and make distasteful to God that which might otherwise be commendable.

The Pharisee was self-righteous and proud. He came before God, parading his virtues, thinking they would commend him to God. They did the very opposite. The Pharisee despised others. This, of course, is the very nature of pride and self-righteousness. In proportion as men exalt themselves and think of their virtues, they despise others. It cannot be otherwise. This is contemptible in the eyes of God.

Seven Words

On the other hand, note the humility of the publican. He did not parade his virtues, but threw himself on the mercy of God. The seven words of his prayer-how comprehensive! “God be merciful to me a sinner.” I tell you,” Christ says, “this man went down to his house justified.”

Among theologians there is much learned discussion about justification, and how it may be acquired. Note how simply Christ puts it: The publican “went down to his house justified.” He attained God's favor by a short prayer which evidently expressed the desire of his life and heart. Whoever has the same attitude and the same mind may also attain.

The prayer was short, but note how complete it was. Four words stand out distinctly in it: God, merciful, me, sinner. When a man realizes that he is a sinner there is hope for him. This the publican did; the Pharisee did not. The publican felt his need of mercy; the Pharisee did not. He was not as “this publican”; he was not a sinner. On the other hand, he had many things to commend him. Why should he need mercy? He did not ask for it and did not receive it.

It is no small task to confess oneself a sinner. It is easy to admit sin in a general way, but it is another thing to confess before God that we are just common sinners, as much in need of mercy as “this publican.” Most of us are of the opinion that as we do not commit any of the so-called great sins, a little pride will be overlooked by God and will not put us in the same class as ordinary sinners. Because we are not guilty of great sins, we expect preferential treatment, just as the Pharisee did.

For a long while Peter had no doubt as to his own importance. It took some hard lessons before he learned that he needed salvation the same as the worst sinner, that indeed he was one of them. Had he not proudly declared that others might basely forsake the Lord, but that he would not? No, although all shall be offended, yet will not I” Mark 14:29. He was so sure of himself that “he spoke more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise.” Verse 31. The others, not to be outdone, said the same.

It was this same Peter who a few hours later, with cursing and swearing, denied that he even knew the Lord. Pride goes before a fall, and Peter's fall was great. But he learned his lesson. He became humble and teachable.

Many have too great confidence in themselves. They are sure of what they can do. There is not the least doubt in their minds as to their own value. Others may not appreciate them as much as they should, but that only causes them to put greater valuation on their own virtues and attainments.

What a blessing it is to have a just estimate of oneself, to be able to see ourselves as others see us! God does not want us to speak derogatorily of ourselves or to depreciate what God has done for us; but self-righteousness and pride are most offensive in the sight of God, and we need special help from on high to be freed from them.

Christ's Prayer for His Enemies

“When you stand praying, forgive, if you have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.” Mark 11:25, 26.

A forgiving spirit is one of the conditions of effective prayer. This has been mentioned before, but I wish to call attention to it again, especially as illustrated in Christ's own prayer on the cross. It is clear that we cannot expect the forgiveness of God unless we are willing to forgive. How far is this to be carried? Christ's experience on the cross furnishes the answer.

Jesus had been apprehended Thursday night. He had been hurried from one place to another, examined, scourged, beaten, reviled, spat upon; the thorny crown had been placed upon His head; the purple robe had been put upon Him; mock worship had been rendered Him; He had been blindfolded and struck to see whether He could tell who did it. Now He was hanging on the cross, His weight resting on the nails driven through His hands and feet. The mocking crowd was below Him, and at His feet men were casting lots, gambling, for His garments. Under these circumstances come the first words from the cross, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' Luke 23:34.

It may be difficult to believe that they did not know what they were doing, but Christ says they did not, and His testimony is conclusive. They knew that they were crucifying a man, but they did not know that they were crucifying the Son of God. (See I Corinthians 2:8.) In any event, the words of Christ exemplify the highest attainment in Christianity. The nails had been driven through His hands. He had been subjected to every indignity. And now He prays for them: 'Father, forgive them.'

If Christ under these circumstances could pray for His enemies, are there any conceivable circumstances under which we might not, and should not, do the same? Friends may fail us, enemies may hurt us, men may speak evil things about us, but no one has ever yet nailed us to a cross. Compared to Christ, few of us have suffered anything worth mentioning. If Christ could pray for His enemies, should we not do the same?

There are few churches that have not at some time or other had difficulty and dissension among the membership. Some of these breaches take years to heal, and at times it is necessary for some to be laid away before harmony is restored. What a disgrace to Christianity such conditions are! Two for whom Christ died quarreling with each other, involving others in their difficulty, until the whole church is divided into factions! Shame on such! Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no healing in Israel? Must Christians expose their shame to the world? Only eternity will reveal how many souls have been lost because a few could not agree, and involved the church in their quarrel. How many young people have looked at the disgusting spectacle of Christians quarreling and have decided that if there is no power in Christianity to make professed Christians behave, they will have none of it. Although we cannot excuse the young for such an attitude, surely those who exhibit an unforgiving spirit will not be blameless in the day of God.

Why cannot all have a little more of the spirit of the Master, the forgiving spirit, the kind spirit, the understanding spirit? After all, is not the measure of Christianity we possess gauged by the love we have for the brethren? Is there not a statement by the Master that we shall be known as His disciples by the love we have for the brethren? Read this. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another." John 13:35. If love is the distinguishing mark of the disciples of Christ, should not all practice a little more the virtues of kindness, forbearance, and love?

'Father, forgive them.' No one can pray this prayer for an enemy or for a brother and not be the better for it. We may have been ill treated, spitefully used; still the commandment to pray holds good. I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you. Matthew 5:44. On such as do this the blessing of God will rest. 'Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.' Matthew 5:11, 12.

Family Prayer

Family prayer is nearly extinct. There are yet families who are faithful and true, and where morning and evening prayers ascend to the God of heaven, but it is only a small percentage of the homes of those that call themselves Christians where the family altar is an established institution.

This is a great loss to the family, the individual, and the church - a loss that is well-nigh irreparable, and is indicative of decadent religious interest. When the family ceases to be the unit of life, the results can only be unfortunate, decidedly so from the religious angle. It means that the head of the household no longer functions as the priest, and that if the mother wishes to continue religious instruction, she must take over functions which naturally belong to the husband. The results are not always the best.

What is more beautiful than to have a Christian family gather morning and evening about the family altar, dedicating their lives to God? It leaves an indelible stamp upon the children and serves them as a stay in days to come. It creates an atmosphere of confidence and quiet in the home; the conversation becomes more subdued; irritation is allayed; love prevails. It starts the day as it should be started, with prayer, and leaves sweet memories behind as the father departs for his work. Years later the family worship hour is the one event that stands out prominently in the memories of the home.

A Practical Application

"What can I do," asks an anxious mother, "to keep my children quiet and reverent in the church?" To some this is a most vital question. The church is not the place for disciplinary matters. That should be attended to elsewhere. We cannot answer satisfactorily this matter of discipline. But we have one suggestion to make.

There is no place or time like the family worship hour to teach children reverence. Let the worship be short. Let the children have some part in it. Sing songs they know. Teach them a short Bible text to repeat. Have a short prayer, very short, and then let all repeat the Lord's prayer. This may be varied as circumstances indicate, but the chief thing to remember is that where there are children the whole exercise must be so short that there will be no weariness. During this time let the children understand that there must be absolute quietness and reverence-not a whisper, not the least inattention. After a few sessions of this kind, if rightly conducted, it dawns on even the most recalcitrant child that he must be quiet, that certain things simply are not done, and he will adjust himself accordingly. True, he may attempt to "start something" in the hope that it will work, but if prompt attention is given him, this will stop, and he will resign himself to the inevitable.

A child who has thus been brought up to reverence worship at home, can more easily be made to understand the nature of a church service. True, the mother cannot adjust the length of the service. At times it is altogether too long for the little ones, but whatever the circumstances it must be understood that there is to be no noise or whispering. Absolute quietness must prevail. It may be necessary to take something along to church with which to occupy the smallest children's attention, but this must not take the form of eating, nor must the children be permitted to run around. Often it will be found that the children will quietly go to sleep, which during a long sermon may be the best thing to do.

Parents should realize that they have no right to bring unruly children to church to disturb those who wish to worship. In some churches this does not constitute a problem, as children are not allowed who are likely to cause disturbance. But in other churches children constitute a real problem. There are times when the Spirit of the Lord is present, when God is using the minister as His mouthpiece to communicate to the people the words of life, when suddenly a child becomes unruly and noisy. The attention of the worshipers is called from what is being said, and the effect of the sermon is ruined.

I have seen the mother of such an unruly child look smilingly and approvingly at it, then look around at others for their approbation, seemingly saying to one and all, "Isn't my baby cute?" She takes her time to quiet it. It is nothing to her that a hundred people have been deprived of the word of God; it is nothing to her that the minister is frustrated in his endeavor to make the word effective. Her baby has become the center of attraction, and all is well.

Family worship is not primarily for the purpose of teaching children reverence, but it will take care of situations such as the one here mentioned. When children make disturbance in the church it is evidence presumptive that there are matters in the home that need attention. We find, however, as is mostly the case, that it is not the children that need bringing up as much as it is the parents. But even in this we should be careful lest we judge unjustly. For there are godly mothers who are doing the best they can, who are trying to bring up their little ones in the fear and nurture and admonition of the Lord, but who are working against so great odds at home that it is almost impossible for them to succeed. So let all patience be shown. Let not the preacher exhibit irritation. No one knows the circumstances under which people are attempting to serve God. If we knew all, it is possible that we would bestow praise where we are now likely to place censure. So let all exemplify the Christian virtues; but let parents have in mind that they have responsibilities not only to their children but to the community and to the church in regard to their children's conduct. They need special help from on high for their task.

As we sum up the teaching of Christ concerning prayer, we find that He considered personal prayer as communion, fellowship with God, too sacred and intimate to be shared with others, for which reason He often spent nights alone with God, no human being near. In these seasons He talked with God as we would with a friend, received help and strength from God and also direction for the day or days to come. He found these seasons more necessary than sleep, and depended on them for guidance in everything He undertook. It is safe to say that without prayer Christ could not have done His work, and would not have attempted it. In close fellowship with the Father He was safe. Without Him He could do nothing.

This same communion and fellowship Christ recommends to His followers. As He could do nothing of Himself, neither can we. We need help and strength as much as He. We need daily guidance. We need the assurance of the approval of God in all our undertakings. Christ informs us that He wants us to be one, as He and the Father are one; and that the Father loves us as He does the Son. Moreover, if we ask anything in His name, the Father will give it to us, not only because He loves the Son, but because He loves us.

Ask in Faith

Whatever we ask of God must be asked for in faith. In fact, faith is the prime requisite in prayer. This Christ impressed upon all who came to Him for help. Faith enabled Christ to do great things for the people. Lack of it hindered Him in His work. "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Matthew 13:58. Only as we have faith in God can God do for us what He would.

This faith, however, is to be faith in God, not in our own wisdom. We are to have such complete confidence in God that we shall leave our cases with Him to do or not to do as He thinks best. If we desire something of God, we may ask Him for it. But we are not to command Him; we are not to demand that He do the very thing we ask. We may not know what is best, but God does know what ought to be done; so in faith and submission we are to say, "Thy will be done." This is not always easy, for there are things we want very much. But we are to have faith in God's wisdom and love, and leave the matter entirely to Him. This is faith, and without this it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6.)

If answer to our prayer is not immediately forthcoming, we are not to think that God has not heard our prayer. He has. There may be reasons why it is not possible for Him to do all that He would like to do just then. In such cases we are to search our hearts, find out what He wants us to do, and then cooperate with Him to the best of our ability.

Prayer moves the arm of God and enables Him to do what He could not do unless we prayed. Prayer releases power; prayer moves mountains. Although prayer's first effect is on the prayer, this is by no means its only effect. Prayer really does things; it changes things. It opens the sluice gates of heaven. It brings healing in its train. It brings Pentecost. It is the most sacred exercise of the human soul. It is communion with the Godhead. It is fellowship with the Almighty.

Meditation is the neglected part of prayer, also the most precious. We are to be silent before God. We are to wait for Him. In the silent midnight watches God reveals Himself and heaven comes near. In communion the soul finds its highest and noblest exercise and approaches nearest to God. Prayer is more than a duty; it is a sacred privilege. In private, prayer may be as long as is desired. In public, prayer should be short and to the point. God knows our needs, and we need not expand at length upon our problems. Curiously enough, men have reversed this. They are likely to make long prayers in public, short prayers in private. Some apparently make up publicly for what they omit privately. This should not be. Prayer is too sacred to be made into orations.

We all need to appreciate more than we do the wonderful privilege of communion. I pray that the reader has not read this chapter in vain. If he has not, he will begin to pray as he never prayed before. He will pray intelligently. He will work together with God for the salvation of souls. He will forgive others, as God for Christ's sake has forgiven him. He will ask God for help to answer his prayers, and he will enlist the help of others in the same work. He will receive an altogether deeper experience of fellowship with God, and what it means to cooperate with Him. He will begin to work with God rather than merely for God.

What a wonderful thing it would be if all Christians were praying men and women! There can be no hatred in the heart of one who really prays. How this would transform the world! No hatred! Would not that solve practically every question that now confronts mankind? And is there any other solution to some of these problems? It may be that the world is yet to learn that God's way is not only the best way but the only way for the salvation of mankind. Christ prayed. Therein lay His strength as man. It would be well for us to follow His example. Prayer does things. Prayer moves the arm of Omnipotence. Let the Christian pray. Let all pray. Let us pray.

11. The Problem Of Suffering

ALL is not all sunshine. The Christian is not spared dark days and overcast skies. There are times when discouragement and disheartening experiences come to him, and God seems afar off. He is not conscious of any specific shortcoming on his part, and he wonders why the smile of God is not upon him. He may just have passed through some precious seasons and have felt much of the Spirit of God, but suddenly cloud and mist envelop him, and he becomes perplexed. Why must this happen? Why is not every day full of sunshine, joy, and happiness? Should not the true Christian be free from all that savors of perplexity, discouragement, suffering, and sorrow, and walk in the light of God's countenance without a shadow or cloud of any kind? Is not this the privilege of every Christian? And if he does not have this experience, is he not to believe that the disapproval of God is upon him?

There are Christians who reason this way and do not understand that dark, cloudy days are as necessary as sunshiny ones, and that there can be no real growth in Christian life and experience without a proper proportion of moisture and sunshine. Says Peter, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy." I Peter 4:12, 13.

It is not to be considered a "strange thing" to pass through trial and tribulation. Everyone who goes through to the kingdom will have such experiences. And when trials come, we are not to think that we are forsaken of God. Rather, we are to rejoice, inasmuch as we "are partakers of Christ's sufferings." Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The true Christian will have a desire to follow Him as did Paul, who wanted to "know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." Philippians 3: 10. Paul even rejoiced in his sufferings in the Christian way, and filled up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ in his "flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." Colossians 1: 24.

No, the true Christian is not exempt from trials. Call to mind the saints of the past ages and the affliction that was theirs. Are we to believe that they were sinners above the rest because they suffered, or is there a divine philosophy of suffering, in harmony with which God is accomplishing His work in ways that may not always be clear to us, but which nevertheless are for our good?

This leads us to a study of the problem of suffering. That there is a problem must be evident to all. This problem would be much simplified if we could believe that all suffering is the result of sin, and that every person who suffers is a sinner who needs to mend his life and repent of his sin. Although there is truth in this, it cannot be the whole truth, for there are cases of good men, men blessed of God, which cannot be explained on this hypothesis. In any event, the sufferings of Christ must have another basis; and yet suffering serves a purpose in the divine plan. What is this purpose?

Although sin and sickness are closely related, it is evident that not all sickness is directly traceable to transgression on the part of the sick. Too often the innocent suffer for or with the guilty. Why is this? Though it may not be possible to find a complete and satisfactory solution that will fit all conditions, a study of the problem of suffering in the light of the gospel and the teachings of Jesus may prove highly profitable.

Job's Trials

Throughout the ages men have believed that suffering and sickness were afflictions put upon them by God because of sin. Those who were in health were considered favored by God; those who were suffering had sinned, openly or secretly. This explanation was entirely satisfactory to them.

It was this attitude on the part of the friends of Job which made his suffering so intense. In his anguish he searched his soul to find a possible cause for the calamities that had come upon him. But search as he might, he could find no reason for his affliction. To the best of his knowledge he had done what was right in the sight of God; yet apparently God's displeasure was resting upon him.

His friends, however, had no doubt about the matter. Job had sinned, and there could be no relief for him until he repented of his sins. If he did repent, all would be well, but not otherwise. Job had comforted many in their sorrows, but now that affliction had come upon him, he was troubled.

But Job maintained his integrity, though he admitted that he did not understand why he suffered. Long he was in perplexity, but at last faith broke through, and he decided to be true to God whatever happened. "Though he slay me," he says, "yet will I trust in him." Job 13:15. This faith of Job's culminates in the triumphant statement: "I know that my redeemer lives." Job 19:25.

There is, however, another phase of this incident which throws light on the problem we are considering. It concerns God's purpose in permitting affliction to come to Job.

From the record it is evident that Job did not know of the events recorded in the first and second chapters of the book. He did not know that Satan had challenged God, and that his experience was an outcome of the challenge. This came about in the following manner.

Job was a prosperous man, godly and rich. He had seven sons and three daughters, and also much property. He was highly esteemed by all and was one of the judges who sat in the gate. He was always willing to help the poor and the needy, and his doors were open even to strangers. In all matters he was looked up to, and the prospering hand of God was upon him.

Satan's Challenge

After this introduction we are given a view of a scene which takes place in heaven. "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comes thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." Job 1:6,7. Satan is asked whether he is acquainted with Job, "a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God and eschews evil." Verse 8.

Though Satan does not dispute God's estimate of Job, he suggests that Job does not fear God for naught. "Has not thou made an hedge about him," he says, "and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou has blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land." Verse 10.

In saying this, Satan is true to form. He does not admit the possibility that Job serves God because he loves Him. If he serves God, it must be from utilitarian motives. God has prospered Job, and Job reciprocates by serving and fearing God, not, however, from any worthy motive or settled conviction. Job serves God only as long as He protects and prospers him. The moment that protection is withdrawn Job will serve God no more. "Put forth your hand now, and touch all that he hath," Satan says, "and he will curse thee to thy face." Verse 11.

This challenge God accepts. Satan is given permission to test Job with the one restriction: "Only upon himself put not forth your hand." Satan immediately proceeds to do all that he is permitted to do.

One calamity after another befalls Job. One day when his sons and daughters are together in their eldest brother's house, eating and drinking wine, the disasters begin. The oxen, the sheep, the camels, are destroyed one by one, and at last the messenger brings the news: "Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee." Job 1:18,19.

Satan has done all that he can. He has taken away not only Job's property but also his children, and now he expects Job to curse God. But Job does not do this. He rises, rends his mantle, shaves his head, and falls down upon the ground and worships, saying, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Verses 20-22.

Satan is completely vanquished; his challenge had been accepted. The terms that he himself suggested had been agreed upon, and he had been given permission to do what he asked. But he has failed completely. God's confidence in Job has not been misplaced. Job does not fear God merely for the benefits that he receives. His religion is genuine. It is not dependent upon, or grounded in, favors received.

Satan, however, is not satisfied. At the next meeting the Lord quietly asks him about Job. He reminds Satan that Job still fears God and that he has not given up his religion as Satan had said he would. Says God, "Still he holds fast his integrity, although thou moves me against him, to destroy him without cause." Job 13.

Satan is ready with a rejoinder. The reason he did not succeed in getting Job to curse God is the fact that God did not permit him to touch Job himself. Had he been given this permission, he would have been successful. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." Verses 4, 5.

God again accepts the challenge. The Lord tells Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand; but save his life." Verse 6. This gives Satan permission to do all that his ingenuity can invent to torture Job. He again attempts to prove that men do not disinterestedly serve God. What they do they do for a consideration.

So Satan begins to torture Job. His friends turn against him. His own wife advises him to curse God and die. But Job is not easily turned from his integrity. "What?" he exclaims, "shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips." Verse 10. Satan is definitely and finally defeated, and does not again challenge God, nor does he appear any more in the book of Job. He had come face to face with a man he could not defeat, one who would die rather than sin. And so Satan retires from the conflict.

Job was ignorant of the challenges that Satan had issued. He did not know that he was the subject of debate, or that God was counting on him. All he knew was that disaster had come upon him, apparently without cause. He had done right according to the best light he had, and was sorely puzzled by the things that befell him. Under these circumstances the taunts of his friends were especially hard to bear. They seemed undeserved and cruel.

Lessons From Job

As we review these experiences of Job's, there are some lessons which seem clearly intended. Chief of these is the one involved in Satan's charge that men serve God because it pays them to do so; that in reality God bribes men to serve Him. "Godliness is profitable unto all things," is a definite Bible pronouncement. I Timothy 4:8. Is Satan's charge, therefore, true, and is there no such

thing as disinterested Christianity? Do all men serve God for what they can get out of it? Do Christians do right because they are rewarded for it here or hereafter? or do Christians do right because it is right?

The book of Job proves conclusively that there are men who serve God because they love Him, and not because they have any mercenary motive. This truth is most vital. Had Satan won in this contest, had Job failed in the test, the result would have been most tragic. For in Satan's charge is bound up the very heart of religion. If men serve God because of advantages to be gained, and not from principle, Golgotha is in vain.

It is not part of God's plan to make Christianity profitable in a physical or in a financial way. Were that done, the church would receive such an influx of members that there would not be room in the present edifices or in those that could be built in the next few years. No, God must not favor Christians in this way, lest He place unworthy motives before them and influence them to serve Him for the loaves and the fishes. This is the plan said to be followed by some missionaries in foreign lands who thus gain a following of such as are rightly called "rice Christians." God cannot afford to do this. He must put all men on an equal basis. If any difference is to be made, it is better that the way of the Christian be made a little harder. This will keep out of the church undesirable elements, which might otherwise be attracted.

If we look at the world today, we see no evidence that only Christians are prosperous. A few Christians are rich, but not many. It cannot be contended that non-Christians do not have a fair and equal opportunity to acquire wealth. They have. In fact, the impression rather prevails that it is not easy for a thoroughly honest man to become rich, and that the man who wants to make money had better not have too tender a conscience. It would be disastrous to Christianity should it become evident that religion is a sure way to gain God's favor to the furtherance of financial aims. Far better have it known that it will not do this. Men will then not be tempted to become religious for commercial gain.

Some will object to this reasoning and say that there are those who join the church for this very reason. This may be. But the number cannot be many, and those who do so are held in well deserved contempt. This contempt is evidence that men are convinced that Christianity is not for the purpose of temporal advantage.

Lest some misunderstand, let us add that God has promised that those who serve Him in truth and uprightness will not lack any good thing. This promise, like all others, is based on conditions. If a man will not work, neither will he eat. This holds for the Christian and the non-Christian. We are assured that God has a care for His own, but they must obey the general law of success, the same as others. As they do so, the blessing of God will be with them, temporally and otherwise. The laws of sowing and reaping apply to all men.

There is another lesson which Job's story teaches; namely, that not all suffering is a punishment for sin. This is vital in view of the fact that many people think otherwise. Sickness and suffering are to them a sure sign of God's disfavor, and conversely, they think that if nothing is troubling them, God is pleased with their general way of life. Of such are those who thank God that there are no visible signs of God's displeasure resting upon them.

But such reasoning and such prayers are not safe. There was no sign of God's disfavor resting upon the antediluvians. They ate, drank, married, and were given in marriage until the fatal day came. But the absence of any sign of God's disapproval was not conclusive. At the appointed time the Flood came.

Job had done nothing to bring the calamities upon him. God Himself said to Satan, "Thou moves me against him, to destroy him without cause." Job 13. By this we do not understand that Job was sinless, but rather that Job had not done anything to deserve the disasters that befell him, that they were without cause." We believe, therefore, that there are calamities and sufferings that come to men which are not directly traceable to sin.

Christ's Teaching

It was to a related question that Jesus referred when He told of the Galileans who were killed by Pilate. They had been murdered while they were in the act of sacrificing. Immediately the people concluded that they must have been sinners above others if God permitted this to happen to them. To this Christ answered, "Suppose you that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." Luke 13:2, 3. To further impress this upon the mind of all, Jesus mentioned ---those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them," and added, "Think you that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." Verses 4, 5.

Let us add two other illustrations of the fact that disabilities and sicknesses are not always directly due to sin. The first is the story related in the ninth chapter of John. "As Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing." John 9:1-7.

The man was born blind. However, Jesus stated that neither he nor his parents were directly responsible for this condition. The reason given for the blindness was "that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

The other illustration concerns the apostle Paul. He had a thorn in the flesh." We are not told what that thorn was, but we are informed that he prayed three times for its removal. But it was not removed. The reason he gave was, "Lest I should be exalted above measure. My grace is sufficient for thee," God said, "for my strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:7-9. Paul himself

came to this conclusion: "Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh."

Paul had had many revelations. There was danger that he should become exalted and that others would think he was especially favored of God. Lest this should happen, God gave him a thorn in the flesh. It is a sad commentary on mankind that few, even of the best, can stand prosperity without undue exaltation. God, however, knows how to handle such cases.

Seven Lessons

Our study so far has yielded the following results:

First. Ordinarily, suffering comes as the result of the violation of one or more of the laws of God.

Second. Some calamities, such as those of Job's, come "without cause." Job's experience demonstrates that he did not serve God for profit, and indirectly teaches the lesson that God does not favor those who serve Him to the extent that it constitutes a ground for others to claim that such service is being paid for.

Third. We do not know for what crime, if any, the Galileans were murdered. According to Josephus, Pilate at one time killed three thousand at a feast, and at another time twenty thousand. It was not an unusual occurrence to which Jesus referred. The lesson He drew was that unless His hearers repented, they should "all likewise perish." Luke 13:3. We presume that this statement indicates that these Galileans had not repented, and that therefore they perished, and He warns us that unless we repent we shall likewise perish. They were not sinners above us. They received punishment. Unless we repent the same may come to us. One lesson, therefore, is this: Those who meet a violent death are not to be thought of as sinners above the rest. We all need to repent.

The same lesson is indicated in the story of those upon whom the tower of Siloam fell. That these Galileans were engaged in a religious act, sacrificing, and that the others were not, does not seem to have made any difference. Unless all repent, they "shall all likewise perish."

Fourth. The case of the man who was born blind presents a different problem. The lesson here is not one of repentance. It is rather one of opportunity for Christian service, a challenge to believers to exercise faith. This man was blind "that the works of God should be made manifest in him." John 9:3. This can have no other meaning than that Jesus saw an opportunity to do something for the blind man that would redound to God's glory. Neither the man nor his parents had sinned. God had held him in reserve, waiting for one to come along who had faith. Jesus came, and the man was healed. This privilege might have been given to anyone else who had faith.

It would be rash to claim that every man who is blind or halt or lame presents a challenge to the believing Christian. There are doubtless many who are physically blind who are as unrepentant as those, who have all their faculties. But may we not believe that there are some upon whom God is willing to show His power, some who are waiting for men or women of discernment and faith to present their cases before God, leaving the results with Him? We believe that God has such cases in reserve, and that when the time comes God's power will be manifested. But let none rush ahead before the time. Much harm may be done, and undue hopes may be excited.

Fifth. The case of Paul illustrates the fact that there are times when God's people are sick for their own good. This statement needs a little elaboration.

Paul was a good man. He was wonderfully used of God. But he was not perfect. There was danger of his being exalted because of the great things God had done for him and by him. There was not only danger that he himself would become exalted but also danger that others would exalt him. This must not be. So God gave Paul a thorn in the flesh. We do not know what that thorn was, but we know from the illustration used that it must have been a very unpleasant experience. A literal thorn would call for removal. It would be not only annoying but painful. Paul three times asked for its removal. But God thought best for it to remain. And so it remained. "The messenger of Satan," as Paul called it, was ever present "to buffet," lest he should become exalted above measure. 2 Corinthians 12:7.

So far as Paul is concerned, this passage is very revealing. Paul could have kept silent about this experience. As it is, he is confiding to us that even this late in life he was in danger of pride and needed something to keep him humble. We surmise, however, that Paul is not telling this merely to make a revelation about himself. Rather, he wants us to know that there may be a reason why God lets some annoying thing remain with us.

There are times when God sees that we need certain experiences to keep us humble. At such times we are to think of Paul and say to ourselves, if Paul, such a good man, needed a thorn in the flesh, to keep him humble, may it not be that I need something also?" Paul knew that his experience was not for himself only. He knew that if he recorded it, it would be of comfort and encouragement to coming generations. In this he was not mistaken. Many have been encouraged by the knowledge that Paul had a thorn in the flesh. If such a man needed it, who are we that we should complain?

These considerations bring us to the conclusion that there are afflictions that come to us for our own good. We are in danger of exaltation. We think that we have certain talents, that we can do some things better than others can; and if others do not recognize this, we at least do so ourselves. It gives us a pride of accomplishment of which we perhaps do not boast in public, but within ourselves we know that we are better than others.

This attitude can easily develop into snobbishness or inward contempt for others, perhaps not strongly expressed, but nevertheless felt. This is injurious to the highest development of the soul, and will certainly result in spiritual impoverishment. Under such conditions the only way that God can help us is to give us a thorn in the flesh. It may help or it may not; that depends upon our attitude. At least God has done all that He can do.

If, therefore, certain things annoy us, if we are called to pass through painful experiences, it may be well to examine our souls to see whether there are lessons we need to learn.

If pride is about to get the better of us, if inwardly we do not esteem the brethren as highly as we should, if we are inclined to become exalted, we should ask God for help. If we will but cooperate with Him, all will be well. God knows what we need. He will administer the medicine, but we must be willing to take it. It may not always taste good, but if taken according to direction, it will effect a cure.

Vicarious Suffering

Paul had a great desire to emulate Christ in all matters. Early in his experience he learned certain things about suffering that were in advance of what others of the apostles had learned, or at least expressed. They admonish us to be patient in tribulation, but Paul goes one step further and states that he rejoices in suffering. (Romans 12:12; Colossians 1:24.) In saying this he takes his stand with Christ, who tells us to rejoice and be exceeding glad “when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.” Matthew 5: 11.

Christ's sufferings were vicarious. So was His death. It was for us that He suffered. It was for us that He died. It was for our sake that He endured the cross and despised the shame. (Hebrews 12:2.) All that He did was with others in view. His whole life was vicarious and had saving significance. Is there any way in which we can have a part in this work, any way in which we can help others, and even suffer for them? Is it possible for us to live-at least to some extent-vicariously? To this the answer is yes. There are certain things we can do for others; there are certain ways in which we may even suffer for others for their good.

It is of this that Paul speaks when he discusses the gospel, whereof I Paul am made a minister; who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest ' to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.. whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which works in me mightily.” Colossians 1:23-29.

Note that Paul not only rejoices in his “sufferings for you,” but that he also fills “up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in” his “flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.” Verse 24. Paul suffered for others, and he rejoiced in it. But more-he filled up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh. This he did for the sake of the church.

His earnest hope and expectation was, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” Philippians 3: 10, 11.

Paul desired to know “the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.” This was indeed a high aim. He wanted to suffer, not because of any morbid desire to suffer as such. He wanted to suffer with Christ and to know the fellowship of that suffering. He even wanted to be made “conformable unto his death.” Christ's suffering and death were vicarious suffering and death. Of them Paul wanted to know the fellowship.

In the first chapter of Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians he explains a little more in detail what he has in mind. He does not desire tribulation for its own sake. But as in his tribulation he was comforted of God, he desired to pass this comfort on to others who did not have the fellowship with God which he enjoyed.

This opened up new avenues of service to Paul. The more affliction he himself had, the better he would understand the sorrows and trials of others. God knew just how to administer help and comfort. If Paul could comfort others with the comfort with which he himself was comforted of God, he would be working with God. For this reason Paul desired to know more of the fellowship of Christ's suffering. This would enable him to help others.

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation.” 2 Corinthians 1:3-7.

Paul here states that the purpose of the comfort which we receive of God is “that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble.” Verse 4. The reason for this is that “as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ.” Therefore, “whether we be afflicted, this for your consolation and salvation . . . : or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.” Verse 6.

This puts suffering on a definitely vicarious basis. Paul suffered for the consolation and salvation of others. In this suffering he rejoiced, for he knew that his experiences would enable him to help others more effectively. He would understand their perplexities better; they on their part would have more confidence in him; and altogether he would be a more efficient minister.

It has always been true that he who will be of help to others must himself have had experience in the things wherein he wishes to serve. He who has experienced suffering without becoming embittered, is better able to help those who are in trouble than are others who have never had any affliction. He who has not suffered does not know life. He is handicapped in many ways and is unable either to understand or to sympathize with those who are in difficulty. The man who himself has stood on the brink and looked into the abyss, can better understand and help those who are passing through a similar experience.

An Experience

It is a good thing for a physician to be sick once in a while. It makes him more understanding and sympathetic. A minister once said this to a well-known and able surgeon, not a Christian. The minister felt that this surgeon, along with other physicians, was not as sympathetic and understanding as he should be. The surgeon replied smilingly that he had thought of this himself, and that there probably was much truth in the statement.

Some months after this the minister received a call to visit this surgeon in the hospital. There he found the doctor lying in a cast. He had been in bed for some time and would probably remain there for some months to come. When the minister entered, the surgeon smiled and said that he had not called the minister to pray for him, but just to have a little talk with him. "Do you know," the doctor said, "I have been thinking a great deal of what you said some time ago, that doctors ought to be sick once in a while so that they would be a little more sympathetic. I laughed at the time, and of course did not think that I should soon be on my back here. But nevertheless here I am, and I can assure you that I have done a great deal of thinking since I came here. I am afraid that I have not been as understanding as I should be. I am not really suffering, but I am certainly most uncomfortable. At times the part of the limb that is in the cast itches most annoyingly. But I cannot get at it to scratch it. When I get desperate the nurse laughs at me and says that I am getting along all right, and that there is nothing to worry about, but I am certainly most miserable. And I have at least two more months of it. If I get over this, I think that I shall be a better physician because of it. I believe you are right. Doctors ought to be sick once in a while."

Suffering prepares for service. For this reason Christ suffered. "In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Hebrews 2:18. We need a High Priest who, like those of old, "can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." Hebrews 5:2. For this reason "though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Verses 8, 9.

A person can be of help to his fellow men in proportion to his understanding of their difficulties, his knowledge of the remedy, and his skill in applying it. A person who has never been sick is unable fully to appreciate the condition and feeling of one who is. A person who has never been tempted on a certain point is at a disadvantage in dealing with those who are thus tempted. For this reason Christ suffered. For this reason Christ was tempted. Now "he is able to succor them that are tempted," "in that he himself hath suffered being tempted." Hebrews 2:18. Christ was the prince of comforters because He was the prince of sufferers.

It was this experience which Paul coveted. He wanted to be of help to others, but he knew that there was no other way than the way Christ had shown. For this reason he desired to know Christ "and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." Philippians 3: 10. For this reason he could say that he rejoiced in his sufferings and was satisfied to have the thorn remain.

Sixth. There are sufferings and sicknesses which are vicarious. Paul and Christ suffered for others, and were happy to do so. They knew that it would enable them to serve more efficiently, and give them a better opportunity to enter into the lives and confidences of men.

It may be thought by some that this is an experience that is too high for them, and that they will never be called upon or have the opportunity thus to serve. Let such consider these words of Paul: "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me." Philippians 1: 29, 30.

Paul here presents suffering as a privilege. We are privileged not only to believe but also to suffer. Few Christians consider suffering in this light. If they did, they might yet learn to rejoice in it.

A Personal Appeal

Dear Christian reader, next time you are sick, search your soul to see wherein you have come short of your high privilege, wherein you have transgressed the laws of God or man, wherein you have sinned. If you find that you have transgressed and that you are only suffering for your sin, thank God for His love, thank God that He still cares for you, and covenant with Him that you will by His grace abstain from evil, that you will "sin no more."

If, on the other hand, you search your soul and do not find wherein you have sinned, and are not conscious of any specific sin that might be the cause of your affliction, consider this: I am sick, I am afflicted. It may be that I have come short in some way and am not conscious of it. If so, Lord, forgive. Help me to learn the lesson that there is in this for me. Should it be that there is someone who needs help and comfort, whom I will be better able to help because of my present experience, I pray, Thy will be done. Help me to be patient; help me to keep sweet."

An attitude such as this is helpful whatever the cause of the affliction. But is it beyond the bounds of possibility that God may be permitting you to pass through hard experiences for the express purpose of enabling you to help some soul who is passing through similar ones, but who does not have the confidence in God which you have? The fact that you are both suffering and being comforted prepares you to help souls in need. If you are working together with God, you will not complain. You will thank Him for the privilege He is giving you, "not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake," knowing, that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation." Philippians 1: 29; 2 Corinthians 1: 7.

He Bore Our Sicknesses

Christ "himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Matthew 8:17. We understand that this was true in a very real sense. If Christ was to be tempted in all points as we are, it was necessary for Him to feel the pain and experience the lack of vitality

that come with sickness. It might not be necessary for Him actually to lie on a bed of sickness, but He must experience all the infirmities of one who does.

A man can endure a certain amount of pain; then something gives way, and he is unable to control himself any more. He does not have the grip on himself that he formerly had. It would be necessary for Christ to experience this also, or He would never know what such a man passes through. May we not believe that there were days in His life when physically He felt as we do at times, when everything goes wrong, and we feel that we can stand no more? If He did not have such experience, then He has not passed through all that we pass through. But we know that He was tempted in all points like as we are. (Hebrews 4:15.) We know, therefore, that there were times in His life when things came to the point where it seemed that one more straw would cause a catastrophe, that He felt ill in body and soul, and wanted to be left alone. And the last straw was put on, but no catastrophe ensued. He was tempted, He was tried, He suffered, but He did not sin. He stood the test. He simply would not sin. That is Christianity.

The fact that Christ has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, that He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, not only constitutes strong proof of His love to us, but also assures us that we have in heaven an Advocate who knows by personal experience every sorrow and temptation that may beset us. This should assure us of understanding sympathy and forever remove from us the idea that God is a transcendental being far separated from the trials and petty tribulations of man. God is not a God afar off. He is near, and His heart is ever open to our sorrow. No sparrow falls to the ground, not a hair of your head is touched, but God knows. This is to us a strong consolation.

Suffering a Result of Sin

Thus far we have discussed six ways in which suffering and sickness might occur. It should be borne in mind, however, that five of these ways are unusual, and that ordinarily sickness comes as the natural result of sin, directly or indirectly. It is not often that sickness is inflicted directly by God. It is generally traceable to some violation of law, willful or otherwise, and is a natural result of such violation. This is the most common cause of sickness and suffering. Therefore, in case of sickness thorough search should be made for such violation, and the cause removed if it can be found. This is good sense and good religion.

What we call the laws of nature are the laws of life. Obey them and live; transgress them and die. If a man touches a live wire and is killed, we learn from that experience not to touch live wires; and if men deliberately do so anyway, we do not think of the resulting death as an arbitrary decree of God. If a man eats poisonous toadstools, he reaps the result of his folly, as does the one who foolishly ventures out on too narrow a ledge on a mountainside and falls to his death. The laws of nature are not suspended because of our ignorance of them. They are no respecters of persons. They are inexorable and undeviating -- willing servants if we obey them, hard masters if we transgress.

The violation of the laws of nature does not always have immediate effect, such as in the cases mentioned. At times the results are years removed from the cause, but they are nevertheless sure. A young person may ignore the advice of experience; he may decide to transgress all the laws of life and health-expose himself unduly to all kinds of weather, eat and drink when and what he pleases-- and may not feel any immediate unfavorable effects. He decides that age has nothing to teach him, that he is proving the common experience of mankind a fallacy, and that he is making a real contribution to knowledge. This he may indeed be doing, but the contribution he makes is primarily for his own benefit. Others have long ago learned that the results of transgressions may be delayed but cannot be avoided. What a young man sows at twenty he often reaps at forty or sixty. The harvest may not appear immediately, but it is surely coming.

Suffering and sickness, therefore, are caused mostly by our own folly or sin, directly or indirectly, immediate or somewhat removed in time. Most of the ills of mankind are traceable to violations of law-natural or spiritual.

It would be well if all could learn the lesson that continued well-being is conditioned upon obedience to law, and that every transgression brings its certain results. This is not an easy lesson to learn, and men are continually hopeful that the law of cause and effect will not be operative in their case, but their hope is vain. As long as this world stands, the laws of God stand. Water will continue to run downhill, and the multiplication table will remain in effect. Men should long ago have learned this.

There is still one more thing to consider - accidents and calamities that are directly traceable to an act of God. This constitutes the final consideration of the causes of suffering.

Seventh. The two cases in which accidents or calamities came under consideration in the earlier part of this chapter are those in which the eighteen were killed when the tower of Siloam fell, and the Galileans who were killed by Pilate. In neither case was the calamity an act of God. What I here have reference to is such calamities as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and other vagaries of nature, clearly not man made.

Acts of God

Many calamities which we call acts of God and for which we hold Him responsible are not acts of God at all. A dam breaks, and lives are lost. It may be an act of God, but it is much more likely that the cause was defective workmanship, that the contractor skimped where he should not have, that the dam was not anchored securely; or any one of many other things. It is not fair to blame God for what man has done or has omitted to do.

A disaster happens at sea. Many lives are lost. It may be an act of God, but ordinarily there are human causes that are at least contributory to the disaster. Had the ship been built a little more solid, had the captain been a little more watchful, had proper facilities been on hand and the crew thoroughly drilled, the disaster might have been avoided, or at least its results greatly minimized.

A famine occurs. Thousands and even millions of lives are lost. Again, it may or it may not be an act of God. Men may have destroyed the fertility of the land or they may not have exercised proper foresight or precaution. A famine would lose much of its

terrors if men were willing to cooperate and divide the bounties which God bestows. It is evident from past experience that every land and every field does not every year produce an abundance. On the other hand, there has never been a real worldwide famine. There is always plenty somewhere. Men, however, have not learned the lesson that they are their brother's keeper. Though we do not contend that famine is always caused by man's neglect, we do contend that it is generally so, and that its effect could be very much minimized by cooperation on the part of man and a little more brotherliness.

Earthquakes are not man made in any way. They are due to a variety of causes, apparently all of them beyond the control of man. Certain districts are known to be earthquake areas, and it would seem that if men build in such regions, and insist on erecting tall buildings, they should so build that the structures they rear will stand the shocks that are sure to come. If a city which has experienced an earthquake ignores the past and erects flimsy buildings, there would be little ground for blaming future disasters on God.

Indeed, if men lived and built as God wants them to, there would be little damage from earth shocks. But if men build in dangerous regions, if they build tall structures, they must build with these possible contingencies in mind. If they do not, they are themselves to blame.

But making all allowances for man's failures, we are bound to admit that there are times when God interferes with the ordinary course of nature, and disasters occur. We cannot explain Noah's Flood on any other hypothesis, or the annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrah, or the destruction of Pharaoh's army. These events were all due to the direct intervention of God, and doubtless served a purpose in His plan.

When we thus segregate the causes of calamities and disasters, we find that for many of them man himself is responsible, and for those which are chargeable to God there is a definite reason. God could no longer tolerate the sinners in the time of Noah, and the Flood came. He saw the wickedness of the cities of the plain, and fire fell on Sodom and Gomorrah. Pharaoh had oppressed the people of God, and destruction overtook him and his army. In each case there was a definite transgression and also a definite punishment. God keeps account with nations as well as with individuals. When the cup of iniquity is full, destruction comes.

In most cases men bring about their own suffering and punishment, and only seldom does God step in to take a hand in matters. When He does so it is for a definite purpose. Men, to a much greater degree than they think, are the cause of their own punishment.

Prayer for the Sick

Wherever Christ went He found those who were sick and needed help. Wherever and whenever their faith permitted it, He healed them. Many who had been blind received their sight. Many were praising God whose ears He had unstopped and whose tongues He had loosed. Many who had been halt and maimed, who had been suffering or possessed of evil spirits, were made whole and restored to society as useful members. Christ devoted more time to healing than He did to preaching.

The question is often raised as to why such healing is not seen in the church today. Has God changed? Is there no more healing to be done? Some think that there was a time when God was needed more than He is now. This was before we had the medical knowledge we now possess. Having good doctors, we can dispense with God's services.

Many so-called Christians put more faith in physicians than they do in God. Only in extremity do they call on Him for help. They are like the newsboy who prayed to God only at night. In the daytime he could take care of himself.

These considerations bring us to the question of prayer for the sick. Does God want us to pray for healing? Does God want us to consult physicians? Does God want us to do the best we can first, and then come to Him if help can be had no other way? Will God, and does God, honor the prayer of faith today as He did in olden times? These are important questions.

The Gift of Healing

It should first be noted that there is a difference between the gift of healing and praying for the sick. Anyone may pray for healing for himself and others, following the instruction of Christ; but not to many is the gift of healing given. This gift is one of the gifts of the Spirit, as is the gift of prophecy or the gift of miracles, and is bestowed only in rare cases. 1 Corinthians 12:28.) Of necessity he who has the gift of healing also has the spirit of discernment. This Paul had. He looked at the man who was to be healed, and "perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked." Acts 14:9, 10.

If one is to be entrusted with the gift of healing, he must live close to God and must know His will in individual cases. He must not heal those who will misuse the gift of health; he must not heal men regardless of their faith; he must momentarily receive instruction from God, and must promptly follow the instruction. Only as he thus works in harmony with God can power be entrusted to him. The gift of healing means impartation of life and must not be imparted indiscriminately.

As mentioned above, Paul had this gift. He himself had a thorn in the flesh for the removal of which he prayed God three times and was denied. He could not heal himself, but he did heal others. Peter had this gift, "insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits; and they were healed every one." Acts 5:15, 16. "Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." Acts 3:6.

It is probable that others of the apostles also had this gift. "By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch." Acts 5:12.

It must be a wonderful experience thus to be entrusted with the giving of life and health to others! It must be wonderful thus to be in the confidence of God! Would that there were men today to whom God could entrust His wonderful gift!

Not many have the gift of healing, but the privilege of praying for the sick is given to all. Of this James says: Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." James 5:13-16.

Of late years there has been a great deal of confusion with reference to prayer for the sick. Sects have arisen with healing as their prime objective. Some of these deny the reality of sickness and death, and attempt to restore men by removing what they consider false conceptions; others admit the existence of these evils and attempt to remove them by prayer. Although we cannot give support to movements not built upon a "Thus said the Lord," we can but be glad that attention is being called to a vital teaching of the gospel, and that the importance of the body as the temple of God and the need of taking care of it is being stressed.

God, who made the body, is interested in the body. He is as willing to restore it to health as He is to restore the soul. He takes no pleasure in sickness and suffering as such. This has been abundantly proved by the healing which Jesus performed while on earth, and He has not changed since He ascended on high. As surely as Jesus healed the sick when He was here among men, so surely will He heal men now if they in faith will turn to Him.

There are some examples of healing in the New Testament which we might profitably study. The account of these is doubtless preserved for our instruction and example, that we may know the conditions upon which we may expect our prayers for help and healing to be heard.

Little Faith

"One of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wherever he takes him, he tears him: and he foams, and gnashes with his teeth, and pines away: and I spoke to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He answers him, and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me. And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And often times it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou can do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou can believe, all things are possible to him that believes. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting." Mark 9:17-29.

The case here presented was about as hopeless as any case could be. The young man had been possessed of an evil spirit from childhood. This spirit would tear him, cast him into the water and the fire, and leave him as one dead. As Jesus did not at any time address the young man himself, but talked with the father, it appears that the one possessed was unable to help himself.

The father did not have much faith. "If thou can do any thing," he said, "have compassion on us, and help us." To this Jesus promptly answered, if thou can believe, all things are possible to him that believes." 'Straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

In this incident two extremes are placed together: a difficult case—"this kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting" (verse 29); and little faith. The father's statement, if thou can do any thing," indicates that he was not sure that Jesus could help. His later statement, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief," also indicates that his faith was not strong. But he wanted to believe, he asked the Lord to help him believe, and the Lord accepted this desire and acted upon it without delay.

It is in connection with this same case, as Matthew reports it, that Jesus said to His disciples when they asked Him why they could not throw out the evil spirit, "Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." Matthew 17:20.

The father had little faith, and yet because of such faith as he had, Jesus was able to do great things for him. In contrast to the faith he should have had, Christ compared his faith to a mustard seed. Yet even this little faith enabled Jesus to perform one of His mighty deeds of healing. It seems evident that one of the reasons for recording the incident is to show what great things God can do if we have faith, even as little as a grain of mustard seed.

We should be careful not to put greater stress on words than they will bear. Yet, what are we to do with Jesus' statement to the twelve that if they had faith as a grain of mustard seed they could remove mountains? We can interpret these mountains to be mountains of difficulties; but that does not make the statement any easier of belief or of fulfillment. We have all known difficulties that were just as hard to remove as literal mountains; and yet God says that if we only had a little faith, even as a grain of mustard seed, we should be able to remove them. The final statement is still stronger: "Nothing shall be impossible unto you."

Of the mountain Jesus says, "It shall remove." Let men believe the mountain to be whatever kind of mountain they please, the words remain: "It shall remove." How are we to relate ourselves to this saying? And what are we to do with the words: "Nothing shall be impossible unto you"? Even if we pare these statements down to the measure of our faith, what do they mean?

We cannot escape that Jesus here means to teach us that there are reaches of faith which we have not fathomed, fields into which we have not entered, possibilities of which we have not dreamed. It does not seem possible that Jesus would make such

statements only to mock us. No, if we had only a little faith, He would do great things for us. An example of what He can do with little faith is given in the incident just recorded. What might He not do if we had real faith?

One lesson is clear from the account of the healing of the young man possessed of the evil spirit: If any healing is to be done, there must be faith. "If thou can believe, all things are possible to him that believes." Not until the father had confessed his faith in Christ, could or did Christ do anything for the son. One requisite, therefore, to healing is faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God or have Him exert His power in our behalf. It need not be the full measure of faith; but there must be some faith before God can act.

Two Cases of Faith

There were times when Christ was astonished at the faith exhibited by those who appealed to Him. One case is reported in Luke 7:2-10. "A certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: for he loves our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou should enter under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it. When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick."

Another case is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew. "Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she cries after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." Matthew 15:21-28.

The centurion was not a Jew, neither was the woman of Canaan. Yet both of them exhibited faith far in advance of anything that had been shown in Israel. This was prophetic of the Gentiles who should come to a knowledge of the truth, and who would show their appreciation of the gospel to an extent far greater than did the chosen people.

The centurion was a man of authority. When he said to a soldier, "Go," there was no question as to his being obeyed. When he said, "Come," it was the same. As he had authority in temporal things, so he conceived of Christ as having authority in spiritual matters. He had complete faith in Christ, and he did not even think it necessary for Him to come to his house to heal his servant. If He would just say the word, the servant would be healed. The disease would immediately obey the word of the Master and depart. It was evident to him that Christ was Lord of all, and never for a moment did he doubt. Christ marveled at such faith. He had not found the like in all Israel.

It cannot be said that the woman of Canaan was encouraged by Christ to ask for help for her daughter. The only way we can explain the attitude of. Jesus is to believe that He was testing her faith. He wanted to prove her sincerity and persistency, for her own sake and also for the sake of the disciples. To them it was an object lesson which showed the great desire of other nations for that which Israel was about to reject. In after days, when the Jews rejected the gospel of the kingdom, the disciples could turn in confidence to the Gentiles. They knew that among them were those who would be glad to accept the Messiah. They had a visual demonstration of this in the woman of Canaan.

Jesus did not encourage this woman. He turned from her, so that she had to follow Him to get a hearing. But she did not give up. When Jesus said that He was sent only to the house of Israel, she pressed her petition, saying, "Lord, help me." When Jesus, doubtless for the sake of the disciples, spoke of taking the bread away from the children and giving it to dogs, she had an answer ready. She simply would not be denied. To Israel the bread of heaven was offered, and they refused it. To this woman, the bread was at least apparently denied, and she would do anything to obtain it. The disciples could not fail to get this lesson; and they did not forget it. There was a work to be done for the Gentiles.

That Jesus was testing the woman is clear from the statement which He at last addressed to her, "O woman, great is thy faith." All doubt of what Jesus had in mind was now dispelled. He had merely been proving her. And she had stood the test. She was willing to take any place, she was willing to suffer reproach, if she could only have the desire of her heart. She knew that Jesus could help her, and her persistency as well as her humility won out. Her daughter was healed.

Tell No Man

It is interesting to note that Jesus at times told those who were healed to keep the matter quiet. "He charged them that they should tell no man what was done." Luke 8:56. To the cleansed leper Christ said, "See thou tell no man." Matthew 8:4. To the blind men He said, "See that no man know it." Matthew 9:30. Jesus did not attract attention to Himself. He did not claim and announce to

the whole world that He was a healer. Quietly He went about His work, healing the sick, not taking honor to Himself. Few who covet the gift of healing would be willing to keep quiet about it should they receive it.

Faith is essential to healing. Are there other conditions necessary to assure answer to prayer? Yes, there are other conditions. Of these we shall now speak. Some have the idea that effectual prayer is the ability to wheedle some favor out of God which He is reluctant to give, but which He at last bestows upon us if we are persistent enough. The unjust judge seems to be their idea of God. (Luke 18:1-8.) They forget that this parable does not tell what God is, but what He is not. He is not an unjust judge. Men do not have to annoy Him till He gives them what they want. Favors are not obtained that way; nor does God want us to think of Him in terms of an unjust judge.

Submission to God's Will

While persistency in prayer is commended and commendable, mere persistency is not enough. God has promised to answer prayer, but He has not promised that He will always give us what we ask. God is both too wise and too good to do this. Even an earthly father will not do it, for he knows that children do not always know what is good for them. A child may ask his father for candy, and the father may think best to withhold it. So the Father in heaven may withhold that for which we ask. If He does, it is for our own good.

For this reason it is well for us to pray as did Christ in the garden, "Not what I will, but what thou wilt." Mark 14:36. Matthew reports that the second time He prayed, He said, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." After this He "prayed the third time, saying the same words." Matthew 26:42, 44.

Some think it shows lack of faith to pray that the Lord's will be done. Jesus prayed thus in the garden, and surely no one will charge Him with lack of faith. He had come to give His life a ransom for many. The powers of darkness were about to overwhelm Him. His humanity shrank as He contemplated the dreadful cost of saving man, and in agony of soul He wondered if there was any other way in which it could be done. But there was no other way. So in submission He prayed, "Thy will be done." "Not what I will, but what thou wilt."

There are times when we very much desire that God shall answer our prayers in our own way. We are not willing to let God have His way if it differs from ours. We would like to change the prayer from "Thy will be done," to "My will be done." We are not completely submissive; we have not as yet learned to say from the heart, "Thy will be done."

Obedience

The true child of God is first of all obedient. He is not, he cannot be, willful. Whatever desires he has he places at God's disposal; however much he wants a certain thing, he does not want it unless God thinks it best for him to have it. He has faith in God to the extent that he believes that God knows better than he what is good for him. Therefore, when he asks God for something he has such complete confidence in God that he is willing to leave the matter of decision with Him. Whether God sees best to give or to withhold, he is content. This is the supreme exhibition of faith.

As the subject of prayer is discussed more fully in the chapter on communion, I shall here stress only two points, faith and obedience, the former really including the latter. Obedience to God's will includes submission as well as active performance. If God commands us to do, we must not hold back. If He commands us to wait, we have no other choice. Complete submission to God's will is included in obedience.

As submission is included in obedience, so obedience is included in faith. The faith we are asked to exercise is not faith in our own judgment, or even faith in prayer. It is faith in God, that He knows, and that He will send whatever is best. Some seem to think that to exercise faith means that we must believe that God will do for us exactly what we ask. But faith in God is faith in God's wisdom, not in our own; faith that He knows, not we; faith that He will do what is best for us rather than what we in our ignorance think should be done. We are indeed to have faith that God has power to do whatever we ask; however, we are to have faith not only in God's power but also in His wisdom. Hence, our prayer must always be, "Thy will be done."

John says, "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us." I John 5:14. We may ask anything of God, but if we are to be sure that He hears us, it must be "according to His will." Therefore, in all our prayers we must not only add the words, "Thy will be done," but in our hearts be submissive to Him who does all things well -- who is too wise to err, and too kind to give us that which is not for our good.

The whole matter of effective prayer, therefore, rests upon faith-faith that God has the power to do what we ask; faith that He has the wisdom to withhold or to grant as He sees best; faith that whatever God does is the very best; faith to accept God's decision without murmuring and bow in submission to it if God sees best; faith, not only to bow in submission after our petition has been denied, but to submit the whole matter to God's decision and wisdom before He grants or withholds by adding to our prayers the wonderful words of faith and submission, of acknowledgment of God's superior wisdom and goodness, "Thy will be done."

Physicians and Prayer

In the earlier part of this chapter I asked some questions which I shall now endeavor to answer. Does God want us to pray for healing? Yes; again and again we are invited by Him to make our wants known to the Father of all. Hear these words of life: "Watch and pray." Matthew 26:41. "Men ought always to pray." Luke 18: 1. "Pray for them." Matthew 5:44. "Pray you." Matthew 24:20; 9:38. "Pray always."

Luke 21:36. "Pray one for another, that you may be healed." James 5: 16. "After this manner therefore pray you." Matthew 6:9. "Pray without ceasing." I Thessalonians 5:17. "Brethren, pray for us." Verse 25. These scriptures definitely invite us to pray to the God of heaven who alone hears and answers prayer. They are more than an invitation. They are a command.

Does God want us to consult physicians? Does He want us to do what we can, and then ask Him for help? Yes and no. God wants us always to do our best, to do what we can, and He will bless our efforts. But if the question is asked whether God wants us to do our best first and then if we do not succeed ask Him to step in, we would have to answer that this is not what God wants. He wants us always to do our best, asking His blessing upon our efforts, and He does not want us to wait until we have exhausted ourselves before we come to Him. God wants us to use the intelligence He has given us, and He wants us to keep in close touch with Him always. Let us take a specific case.

A boy falls into the water. A life preserver is hanging near. A Christian standing by can do one of several things: He can pray God to save the boy. He can throw out the life preserver. He can jump into the water to help. Or he can do nothing. Here are four things that he can do. Which will he choose? If he can swim, he may think it best to dive in after the boy. If he cannot swim or if it seems best not to dive in, he will throw out the preserver. Or, he may even throw out the preserver and also jump in himself. Whatsoever he does, he will do it with a prayer for help, asking for strength for the undertaking. It would seem folly for a Christian to kneel down and pray God to save my boy, while refusing to throw out the life preserver. He would justly be condemned for using neither his head nor his heart.

Another case. A little boy accidentally cuts himself with a knife. The gash is deep, and the blood is flowing freely. What is the Christian mother to do? There is only one thing to do: try to stanch the flow of blood, asking God's help in doing so. The mother hastily gets a bandage, praying God in the meantime to bless her ministrations.

Still another case. A little boy attempts to swallow a safety pin, but it lodges in the throat. Mother cannot remove it. Desperately she tries, praying the meanwhile for help. It so "happens" that just then a physician goes by, having with him the instruments necessary to administer aid to the boy. With a few skillful movements he grasps the offending obstacle, and the boy is saved. The mother believes that the God of heaven heard her prayer, and that just in time He sent the doctor to do what she could not do herself.

God always wants us to do our best. If a person falls into the water, he may refuse to take hold of the rope that is thrown to him, saying that he prefers to trust in God. Both the good sense and the sanity of such a person may be doubted. He has a right to pray to God, he ought to pray to God, but he also ought to take hold of the rope if he wishes to be saved.

Some take the position with reference to sickness that we have no right to seek the help of a physician. Such a position cannot be consistently maintained. If I get a speck of dust in the eye, I have a right to remove it. If I cannot do so, I have a right to ask one with the necessary skill to do for me what I cannot do myself. God has given to some men skill along certain lines which others do not have. They are to use that skill for the service of mankind. If my automobile refuses to function and I cannot make the necessary repairs myself, I take it to a man who can. If a tooth decays and must be extracted, I go to a dentist. If I am sick, it is my privilege to go to a physician, and in doing so I honor God, who has given skills to men that they may be a blessing to mankind.

Perhaps a word more should be said about physicians. Some people give them honor due only to God. This should not be. They are but men, and though they should be honored, as should every honest workman, they must not be given the honor which is not their due. After all, no physician can heal. God only can do that. A physician may apply remedies, but it is God who heals. We must not give man credit for doing that which God only can do.

There are unworthy physicians who like to use the knife when it is not strictly necessary. Here the Christian physician is a great blessing in giving sound advice. Some patients have died because of needless operations. Others have died when an operation perhaps would have saved them. It is not for a layman to say or to give advice. The Christian doctor must be the counselor in such matters. And what a blessing it is to know that if an operation becomes necessary, the Christian surgeon, in taking the knife in hand, will offer a prayer to the God of heaven to guide the knife and give the needed wisdom and skill for the occasion! The knowledge of this gives courage and strength in a dark hour.

The human body is a wonderful instrument and must not needlessly be destroyed. Since it is the temple of the living God, it must be held in reverence. Whatever destroys or defiles it, whatever hinders it from functioning with the highest degree of efficiency, must be eschewed. Diet, work, sleep, rest, clothing all are important factors and should have consideration.

A Summary

As we sum up the teaching of the Bible and of Christ on suffering, sickness, and healing, we arrive at certain conclusions. God does not want His people to be sick and to suffer; yet these experiences may serve a divine purpose. We are mostly the cause of our own troubles; and when this is the case we should attempt to discover wherein we have transgressed, and "go, and sin no more." When we have learned this, the suffering has accomplished its purpose. We are then able to agree with the apostle when he says, "Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Hebrews 12: 11. He therefore gives this admonition: "Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives, If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not? But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Hebrews 12:5-11.

It is not always easy to be cheerful under tribulation, but when we know that it is "for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness," we shall be able to bear that which under other conditions might be unbearable.

From our study we learn further that not all suffering is a punishment for sin, but that God for our good and for the good of others permits certain ones to pass through experiences which not only make them better Christians but also enable them to be a help to others. Paul was thankful to God that he had the privilege of filling up in his own flesh that which remained of the sufferings of Christ, knowing that he would be a much more able minister because of his afflictions. In the joy which he experienced from being a partaker of Christ's sufferings, he invites us to join, so that we might also be partakers of the joy of Him who "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12:1 This view gives suffering a definite evangelical aspect and should cause many to rejoice who otherwise mourn.

God does not want His people to suffer or be sick. Christ did His best while He was here on earth to abolish sin and sickness. He is abundantly willing to save and heal, and we are doubtless altogether too slow in bringing our sick ones to Him. The same Jesus who formerly looked in compassion on the multitude does the same today. He wants to be known as the God "who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all thy diseases." Psalm 103: 3.

The healing which God promises as freely as He does forgiveness of sin, is for all; yet it is conditioned. The chief, one might almost say the only, condition is faith. The faith with which we are to ask for healing embraces and includes faith in God's wisdom to know what is best for us, and must never take the form of command. Real, intelligent faith in God recognizes His superiority and wisdom. Instead of asking for what we want, we should ask for what God wants. Our prayer should always be, "Thy will be done." This prayer coming from the heart means resignation, consecration, submission. It means willingness to accept what God desires us to have. This only is true prayer. If men would spend time on their knees to find out God's will rather than attempt to get God to agree to their propositions, prayer would have a different meaning, and would be much more effective.

Finally, no prayer is a substitute for work or for good sense. God has given to every man a measure of intelligence, and He wants him to use it. We are to serve God not only with our whole heart but also with our whole mind. This means that we are to apply to our religion the same good sense that we use in other relations of life. There are doubtless those who believe that God who makes the grass to grow should also cut it. Such need to learn that prayer and work are not far separated. God has given each man a work to do, and for that work prayer cannot be substituted.

Let us be thankful that we have a God who is interested in us, and who will do all for us that we will let Him do. He will not withhold from us any good thing. May He grant us grace to work understandingly with Him for our own salvation and for that of others. May He grant us the faith which Jesus had, and with "the faith of Jesus," may we also have the power of Jesus-power with God and with men.

12. Christ's Second Coming

WHEN editor of the Sunday School Times, Charles G. Trumbull related the story of how he came to be interested in the doctrine of the second coming of Christ. He had been visiting a good friend of his, Robert D. Speer, and was conversing with Mr. Speer's mother about the things of God, when she suddenly asked, "Mr. Trumbull, have you ever especially studied the second coming of Christ?"

To this he answered, "No, I have not." Then she said, "Do so, and do so at once. It is the key to the Bible." This expression set him to thinking and as he began studying the subject, he soon found out that the doctrine of the Second Coming of the Lord is indeed a key to the Bible.

He then related a conversation he had with a consecrated businessman. He had occasion in this conversation to mention the subject of the second coming of the Lord, and asked the businessman whether he had ever given any study to this truth. "No," he answered, I have been a practical man all my life. As a businessman I have had to confine myself to practical matters. I have never studied the subject." On another occasion Dr. Trumbull was talking with a Philadelphia lawyer and asked him the same question that he had asked the businessman. The reply was, "I have never been especially interested in speculative matters of that sort." He related a third experience, this time with a woman, a very earnest and active Christian teacher, who when asked the same question answered him, I have never studied it, and I am not interested in it. The only thing that interests me is to be busy here in this life doing God's will, and if I am doing that, I shall be ready when Christ comes, whenever that may be."

Dr. Trumbull then went on to tell how he felt that a sad mistake was being made by such persons as the three just quoted, who seemed to think that an intelligent knowledge of the subject of the Lord's return had no practical bearing upon a person's daily life, whereas in reality it is one of the most vital doctrines in the Bible and powerfully affects one's thoughts and habits of life.

"To my mind," says D. L. Moody, "this precious doctrine of the return of the Lord to this earth is taught in the New Testament as clearly as any other doctrine in it; yet I was in the church fifteen or sixteen years before I ever heard a sermon on it. There is hardly any church that does not make a great deal of baptism, but in all Paul's epistles I believe that baptism is spoken of only thirteen times whereas the return of our Lord Jesus Christ is referred to fifty times; and yet the church has had very little to say about it. Now, I can see a reason for this. The devil does not want us to see this truth, for nothing would wake up the churches so much. The moment a man takes hold of the truth that Jesus Christ is coming back to receive His followers to Himself, this world loses its hold upon him. Gas stocks, water stocks, and stocks in banks and railroads are of much less consequence to him then. His heart is free, and he looks for the blessed appearance of his Lord, who at His coming will take him unto His blessed kingdom."

This quotation from Mr. Moody is very much to the point. The doctrine of the second coming of the Lord is indeed a precious doctrine. It is a fact that the moment the truth of Christ's coming takes hold of a man this world loses its hold upon him. Even as the

blessed news of the coming of the Christ-child in the manger of Bethlehem was of surpassing importance to the people of God at that time, so now the Christ's Second Coming truth of the second coming of Christ is of surpassing importance to this generation.

The Hope of the Church

Since the day of the ascension of our glorious Lord and Redeemer, Christ Jesus, the "Blessed hope" of the church, has been the return of the Master in the clouds of heaven. (Titus 2:13.) John the Revelator voiced that hope when he closed his book with the prayer, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Revelation 22:20. The members of the early church greeted each other with the salutation "Maranatha," which means "O Lord, come." (I Corinthians 16:22.) Throughout the long dreary years of humiliation and persecution the cry rose from millions of hearts, "How long, O Lord?" Revelation 6: 10. For generations the church has sung:

"Come, Lord, and tarry not; bring the long-looked-for day;

O why these years of waiting here? O why this long delay?

"Come, for creation groans, impatient of Thy stay;

Worn out by these long years of ill, these ages of delay.

"Come, and begin Thy reign of everlasting peace;

Come, take the kingdom to Thyself, great King of Righteousness."

It is not too much to say that the doctrine and hope of the Second Coming of Christ kept faith and courage alive during the darkest hours of earth's history. From prison- cells, from dungeons, from scaffolds, men have cried to God for deliverance, and been comforted with the assurance that the day of deliverance would come. Evil would not always triumph. Might would not always be on the throne and right in the dungeon. The Lord would vindicate His own. He would appear for the salvation of His people. Maranatha, O Lord, come, was their prayer and hope. It buoyed them up in tribulation, it comforted them in sorrow. The Lord would take to Himself the kingdom and reign in righteousness. He might tarry, but He would surely come.

It might be expected, as Mr. Moody suggests, that the enemy of all righteousness should make every attempt to cast aspersions on a doctrine of such vital importance. This he has done, and has to a great extent been successful. One phase of his work is revealed in the prophecy of Peter: "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." 2 Peter 3:3, 4. These men scoff at the idea of Christ's coming, even as do some Christians, who do not love his appearing-and are not interested in His coming.

I do not wonder, however, that some Christians hesitate to commit themselves on this subject. There is probably no other doctrine that has been so mishandled and abused as the doctrine of the coming of Christ. Ever since the day of Christ, fanatics have arisen who have set a definite time for the end of the world to come, and have been disappointed in their expectations. This has brought the doctrine into disrepute; and there are honest Christians who fear to give study to this subject lest they be classed with time setters and fanatics. It might be well, therefore, to assure the reader that we are not interested in time setting; that we do not profess to know the day or hour or year of Jesus' coming; that we have nothing in common with those who are wise above that which is written. Whereas we personally believe that the time is nearing for the Lord to come, we have no sympathy whatever with those who make predictions as to the time of the Lord's appearing. We dare not go beyond that which is revealed in the Word. To that Word we cling. Only thus are we safe.

Of late years there has been a difference, however, in the attention given to this subject. There are few denominations today that do not have a more or less clearly expressed view on the subject of the Second Coming of Christ. Even conservative churches are openly proclaiming their faith in the soon return of the Lord, and the doctrine is in a fair way of becoming popular. We are concerned about this. For it is dangerous for any Christian doctrine to become popular. Popularity has a tendency to sap the vitality of all which it embraces, and pervert it from its original intention. Notwithstanding this we are glad that the doctrine of the return of our Savior is forging to the front. It gives opportunity for discussion which is most helpful, and calls the attention of the world and of the church to a subject that has been neglected too long.

The First Promise

The promise of a Deliverer, a Savior, was given to Adam immediately after the fall, when God said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Genesis 3:15. Although Adam probably did not understand all that was implied in these words, he did understand that in some way through the seed of the woman deliverance would come. When Cain was born, a "seed of the woman" had come, and it was quite natural for Eve to think that her son was the deliverer. I have gotten a man from the Lord" (literally: I have gotten a man, even Jehovah), said Eve. Genesis 4: 1. She could not know that millenniums would pass before the Messiah should appear. She hoped and believed that her son might be the one, a hope that has been shared by every Israelite mother after her.

When the first animal was killed in sacrifice after the fall, it must have been with deep interest and emotion that Adam witnessed its death. Formed in the image of God, with emotions, feelings, and nature corresponding to God, Adam could not fail to see in the lamb lying at his feet a type of the Lamb of God, "slain from the foundation of the world." Revelation 13:8.

God who had instructed him not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and who told him of the result of disobedience, doubtless also explained to him the fundamentals of the plan of salvation. God had told him that if he sinned he would surely die. And now the lamb died, and Adam was permitted to live on. Adam saw, perhaps dimly, the connection between his sin and the death of the sacrifice. Evidently the lamb had died in his place. And as God made coats of skin for Adam and Eve to wear, they were daily reminded of the lamb who had died for them. Death had provided them a covering for their nakedness, and though they

may not have fully realized the symbolism of what had taken place, they did know that in some way they had gained a reprieve. They knew that the lamb had died and that they lived. For this they were supremely thankful, and praised God for the grace extended them.

Throughout the following centuries God revealed the plan of salvation more perfectly to and through the prophets, who “inquired and searched diligently,” and “prophesied of the grace that should come unto you. Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” I Peter 1:10, 11.

We are not told that Adam was a prophet, but we are told that Abel was. (Luke 11:50,51) When he therefore “brought of the firstlings of his flock,” he must have understood the meaning of what he was doing. He must have seen in the lamb the “sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” I Peter 1:11. Because of this “the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering.” Genesis 4:4.

Prophecies of the First Coming

The increasingly clearer revelations that were given Old Testament prophets of the coming Messiah reached their zenith in the views presented to Isaiah of “the suffering servant” of God, who “was wounded for our transgressions” and “bruised for our iniquities.” (Isaiah 53:5.) Despite all that critics have done to vitiate the force of the picture there presented, the church of God has steadfastly attributed the description of the suffering servant to Christ. To whom else can these words be applied?

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opens not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.” Isaiah 53:3-9.

To confine these words to literal Israel seems entirely inadequate. They find their complete fulfillment only in Christ.

Prophecies of the Second Coming

Though the Old Testament prophets were given views of the first coming of Christ, they also spoke definitely of the second coming. The earliest record we have is that of Enoch's, the seventh from Adam, who prophesied saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” Jude 14, 15.

This prophecy applies to the second coming of Christ when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.” Matthew 25:31, 32. Christ has authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.” John 5:27. This judgment takes place “in the end of this world.” Then “the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Matthew 13:40-42.

Enoch must, therefore, have had a view of the second coming when the Lord arrives “with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment.” As he was only seven generations removed from Adam, it was comparatively early in the history of the world that the course of sin was opened to the prophets in vision, and they were made acquainted with the coming Messiah and with the judgment that should be visited upon the ungodly.

Others of the Biblical writers also spoke explicitly of the second coming of Christ. David had this to say: “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself.” Psalm 50:3-6.

Job confidently affirmed, I know that my redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.” Job 19:25. Isaiah spoke of the day of the Lord in this manner: “Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.... Therefore, I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.” Isaiah 13:9-13. Joel was quite definite:

“It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.” Joel 2:28-30.

Zephaniah contributed this:

“The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hastens greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasting and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.” Zephaniah 1:14-18.

The last prophet of the Old Testament began his last chapter with these words:

“Behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, said the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” Malachi 4:1.

Paul tells us that 'bur conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20); and that we should all be looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

Peter adds his testimony: 'We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1: 16); and the Bible itself closes with the prayer, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).

Following Jesus

The coming of the Lord is a constantly recurring theme in the Bible, a fact which shows that it holds a large place in the estimation and thinking of both prophets and apostles. That all was not revealed to the prophets of old is clear from the fact that they “inquired and searched diligently ... what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify.” But they knew “beforehand the sufferings of Christ,” and also of “the glory that should follow.” 1 Peter 1:10, 11. It was to them “a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts. 2 Peter 1: 19.

To a study of this important but somewhat neglected subject I invite the reader. It held a large place in the teaching and preaching of Jesus. We are never wrong in following the Master's lead. Let us therefore inquire what our Lord has to say of His return.

13. Jesus Is Coming Again

THE last promise in the Bible, given by Jesus Himself, reads, “He which testifies these things said, Surely I come quickly.” To this the church answers, “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Revelation 22:20.

A Savior Is Born

More than nineteen hundred years ago Jesus was born in Bethlehem. The event was heralded by the angels, and peace on earth and good will toward men was proclaimed from heaven. A Savior had been born; the very Son of God had come to earth; the kingdom of heaven had come nigh. Surely men, and especially God's chosen people, would receive Him as the Promised One, and worship and follow Him.

But the world was not interested. A few faithful souls forsook all and followed Him, but the majority of mankind gave little heed. Thousands gathered to hear and see Him, but most of them came for the loaves and fishes. In the crisis hour nearly all deserted Him, and at last He was nailed to a cross. His lifework seemed largely wasted. Judged by the number of adherents at the time of His death, His work could not be counted a success. A few women and less than a dozen disheartened disciples, together with a few other followers were about all that could be mustered in Jerusalem.

The value of a man's work and influence cannot always, however, be correctly judged in his lifetime. It often happens that the work of a really great and noble soul is unappreciated by his contemporaries, and he himself feels that his life is a failure, whereas succeeding generations, viewing his task in the perspective of time, acclaim him as one of the great of the earth. This was true of Lincoln, Bunyan, and Paul. In a superlative degree it was true of Christ.

Christ's First Coming

Judged by the standard of service to humanity, Christ was eminently successful. He planted a seed that has grown to a tree that well nigh fills the whole earth. Bad as the world is in many respects, it is only the influence of Christianity that saves it from utter ruin. Whatever good there is among men owes its origin to Christ and His teachings.

Christ lived a comparatively quiet life in a small, obscure country of the world, but His teachings have profoundly affected humanity. As we contemplate this we are led to attach more and more importance to His every word. And if He is coming again, there can be no more important news to a world perplexed and weary, longing for a deliverer to lead men to a satisfying solution of the problems confronting them and to give them assurance of the future. When Jesus was here He helped and healed men. He knew the answer to their questions and imbued them with new hope. If He is coming again, there is hope for the world.

At the first advent of Christ to this earth the leaders in Israel were in ignorance of the fact that a child had been born who was to be the Savior of the world. They did not know that He was to be born in Bethlehem; they did not know that the time was near for the great event to take place. They were not present to welcome Him.

But they need not have been in ignorance. They could have known. The wise men knew. These wise men were not Jews; but they had studied the prophecies. To them the star in the east had great significance. It not only told them that a Savior was born, but guided them to His place of abode.

The God that led the wise men would have led the leaders of Israel also. They not only could have known all that the wise men knew; they should have known. There was no excuse for them. But Satan had blinded their eyes. Though he could not hinder the coming of the Savior, he could keep men in ignorance of the event. This he did.

What men will do in the future can often be predicted from what men have done under comparable circumstances before. It would therefore not surprise us if Satan now should attempt to create conditions similar to those found at the first coming of Christ. The leaders of the church at that time were unaware that the greatest event in history was about to take place. God forbid that this should be true at this time.

Christ's Kingdom

The idea of a Messianic kingdom loomed large in the religion of Israel. From childhood every Jew had heard of the glories of the kingdom of David, and of the promises of its restoration. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." Genesis 49:10. Shiloh was, of course, the Messiah; and for Him they waited. When He should come He would break the nations "with a rod of iron," and "dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Psalm 19. Israel would then be freed from their hated enemies, the Roman yoke would be thrown off, and the glorious reign of the Messiah would begin.

It was this kingdom that the disciples had in mind, and that they hoped Jesus would establish. Two of them had even gone so far as to induce their mother to intercede with Jesus for them. "Grant," she said, "that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom." Matthew 20:21.

There was no reason why the disciples should so far misunderstand the nature of the kingdom; for Jesus had repeatedly told them that the kingdom which He was about to establish was a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom of grace, and that it would not come "with observation"; that is, it was not a visible kingdom and was "not of this world." (Luke 17:20; Isaiah 3:6.) "The kingdom of God is within you," He had plainly stated. Luke 17: 21. But this and other like statements had made no lasting impression upon them. They had an earthly kingdom in mind, and to the establishment of this kingdom they pinned their hopes.

With such a conception of the kingdom, the idea of the suffering and death of the Messiah did not harmonize. How could Christ establish a kingdom and rule as God's anointed, and yet die? How could He reign and prosper, and at the same time be put to death by the very nation that hailed Him as their deliverer? There must surely be something wrong with Christ's conception of what was in store for Him, the disciples thought. They were perplexed and could not harmonize the two conceptions. When Christ on one occasion stated that in a little while they would not see Him, and that in another little while they would again see Him, they despaired of understanding Him, and concluded, "we cannot tell what he said." John 16:18. They simply gave up. There was no way of understanding Christ.

Get Thee Behind Me, Satan

With this lack of comprehension on the part of the disciples of the work He had come to do, and the method of its accomplishment, it became incumbent upon Christ to do all in His power to make clear to them His mission. This, indeed, He had tried to do while He had been with them; but the ingrown conception which the disciples had imbibed from childhood, that the Messiah would set up an earthly kingdom and deliver them from their oppressors, clouded their minds to the truths Christ attempted to teach them; namely, that His kingdom was a kingdom of grace in the heart, and not an earthly kingdom.

Yet He could not leave them thus. He must make one more supreme effort to set forth clearly what was in store for them and for Him. If He was successful in enlightening them, they would be prepared to act their part intelligently when He should no longer be with them, and they would also be enabled to lead the church in the tumultuous times ahead.

And so, "from that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." Matthew 16:21, 22.

Peter thought that this was no time for Christ to speak of dying, for, to his mind, He was only beginning His ministry. He therefore decided to rebuke Christ. But Peter was totally unprepared, and so were the others, for the response which Christ gave. Quick as a flash, "he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savors not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Verse 23.

The disciples were unable to understand Christ's reasoning; but as He continued to impress upon them the events of the immediate future, they at last came to believe, or perhaps to fear, that He would not long be with them. But if He should leave, what would become of them and what would become of the work? This caused them great perplexity and sorrow, for they were genuinely interested both in Christ and in His work. They were troubled at heart, and hoped that Christ would come to their rescue and calm their fears as He had always done when they were downcast and disheartened.

I Will Come Again

In this they were not disappointed. Christ read their thoughts and took them into His confidence. "Let not your heart be troubled," He said; "you believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. 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 you may be also." John 14:1-3.

I will come again.” Four short words, but what a message they contain, both for the disciples and for us!

As the full significance of these words sinks into our consciousness, we are faced with a tremendous fact: Jesus is actually coming again! Once, centuries ago, He came as a child to Bethlehem. What a difference this first coming has wrought in this little world of ours! And now He is coming again. If His second coming means as much to the world as did His first coming, it will not only be an important event. It will be the supreme event of the ages.

And Christ's Second Coming will mean as much as did His first. He will not come as a child in a manger. Men will not place Him before judges and condemn Him; they will not spit in His face; they will not revile and scourge Him, they will not hang Him on a tree. On the contrary, Christ will come as King of kings and Lord of lords. He will come in His own glory, and in that of His Father and of the angels. He will come to show Himself mighty in His saints, and to deliver His chosen. All the angelic host will follow in His train.

Then will take place the events to which men have looked forward for ages. The resurrection will take place; the dead will be raised; the saints from all lands and from every generation will come forth from their dusty graves. Loved ones parted by death will meet again, joy unspeakable will be mirrored in every face; escorted by the heavenly host they will ascend to heaven and God. Parting, sorrow, tears—all will be at an end. At last the glorious, long-looked-for day will have come. At last the earth and the universe will have peace. Happy day; long-desired day; glorious day! Tarry not, O Lord, but come!

If I Go

When Christ said, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again,” the disciples were naturally interested in where He was going and when He would return. Peter had previously asked, “Whither goes thou?” John 13:36. That this was a legitimate question is evident from the fact that Jesus chides the other disciples for not having asked it. Addressing them, Jesus said, “None of you asks me, Whither goes thou?” John 16:5. He evidently wanted them to be sufficiently interested in His departure to inquire where He was going.

Answering His own question, Jesus declared, -I came forth from the Father and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.” John 16:28. This was a plain declaration of His destination. He was going back to the Father, whence He had come. The disciples were satisfied with the answer, and assured Him, “Lo, now speaks thou plainly, and speaks no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knows all things, and need not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou came forth from God.” John 16:29, 30.

It was during the latter part of Christ's ministry that He began to tell the disciples plainly concerning His suffering and death. It was not easy for them to reconcile themselves to the prospects Jesus held out, for it seemed to dash to the ground all the hopes they had cherished. But Christ was evidently set on leaving them. That seemed clear. What would then be their future? When would He leave them? And when He did go away, when would He return? These were important questions, and when Christ shortly after this opened the way for a further discussion, they asked Him, “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” Matthew 24:3.

This is exactly the question we should have liked to ask had we been there. We might not have dared ask it, for we would be afraid that Christ would answer, “Do not worry about such matters. It does not concern you. If you will only do what is right, you need not trouble yourself about the signs either of My coming or of the end of the world.”

But Christ did not thus answer the disciples. Patiently, clearly, fully, He replied to their questions. All of the twenty fourth chapter of Matthew and most of the twenty-fifth nearly a hundred verses in all—are given to this answer. One would not necessarily argue the importance of the question by the space devoted to it, but surely Christ would not have answered so fully had He considered the question unimportant.

Three Questions

Jesus had been inspecting the Temple. With pride the disciples had shown Him the massive stones of which it was composed, doubtless believing that such a building would stand forever. Unimpressed, Jesus had replied, “There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” Matthew 24:2. It was this answer that led to the question: “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” Verse 3.

The questions involve three things which in the minds of the disciples were not clearly differentiated. The question, “When shall these things be?” would primarily refer to the destruction of the Temple. “What shall be the sign of thy coming?” would of course deal with the subject of the Second Coming, of which Christ had been informing them. “And of the end of the world” would refer to events on the earth presaging the final destruction of things earthly. It is these three questions which Christ answers, and it is these which shall engage our attention.

It should be noted at the outset that this prophecy recorded by Matthew is what theologians call a double prophecy, referring both to the destruction of Jerusalem and also to the second coming of Christ, the one event being illustrative of the other. However, even though the prophecy is of double application, there need be no confusion, for it can easily be determined which passages refer to the one event and which to the other. This will become clear as we proceed.

In our study we shall attempt to find answers to the following questions: How is Christ coming? Is it a visible, literal coming, or a secret, spiritual coming, as at a person's conversion or at death? When is Christ coming? Is the time set for it, or may the time not be known? What will be the signs of His coming? Are there any particular signs that will herald that coming? What will be the condition of the earth as the day of His coming draws near?

How Is Christ Coming?

In attempting to find answers to these questions I shall chiefly quote Jesus on the subject. I do not esteem other writers of the Bible lightly. Far from it. But as we are especially interested in the faith of Jesus, we shall first and chiefly ascertain what Christ has to say.

How is Christ coming? Is His coming literal, so that men can see Him, or is it a spiritual coming such as is meant when we speak of Christ's coming into the heart? This point is vital.

There is no more precious promise in the Bible than that of Christ's dwelling in the heart of the believer. Note the beautiful words recorded in John 14:23: if a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Again: I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." Verse 18. These are among the most precious promises in the Bible, and assure every child of God of the abiding presence of the Savior. Is this what is meant by the second coming of the Lord? We believe not. The Second Coming is an entirely different event. Let us consider this.

In the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, the one under discussion, Christ speaks of the manner of His coming as follows: "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before.

Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not." Verses 23-26. Summing up in verse 27, He comes directly to the question of how the coming shall be. "For as the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

"So shall also the coming of the Son of man be." There can be no question as to the definiteness of this statement and this description. So shall it be. How? "As the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west." All men can see lightning, even those who have defective vision.

It is a dark night. There is a flash of lightning. It almost blinds. No one is in doubt as to what has happened. All see it. The lightning is visible from the east even unto the west. So shall the coming of the Son of man be.

"Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Verse 30. This is no spiritual coming. The tribes of the earth shall mourn, or in the language of the revelator: "The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Revelation 6: 15-17. To this let us add the words of the two angels who were the special spokesmen for Christ as He ascended: "You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven."

Note again the word "so." Christ shall so come. The reference is of His ascension. "When he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." Acts 1:9. In view of this event the statement is made that in like manner as the disciples saw Christ ascend "and a cloud" receive "him out of their sight," so shall He come.

Words could not make plainer the manner of the Second Coming. Christ will come again. He will come with the clouds of heaven. All men will see Him. He will be seen as the lightning is seen. He will come in the same manner as "you have seen him go into heaven." "Every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen." Revelation 1:7. In view of the evident meaning of these statements, we believe Christ's coming to be literal and visible.

14. Christ's Own Prophecy

IN SOME respects the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew is one of the most important chapters in the Bible. In it Christ is presented as prophet, a somewhat unusual role, and foretells future events, giving us a preview of what is to be.

As a child I learned that Christ was a teacher and preacher as well as a healer who went about doing good. But I do not remember ever having heard Him spoken of as a prophet, or that He prophesied as did the prophets of old.

For this reason the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew is remarkable. An interesting feature is that much of what He prophesied is still unfulfilled. That gives us an opportunity to examine the prophecies that already have come to pass as well as those that are now in process of fulfillment, and judge of the future in the light of past fulfillment. To know past prophecies and how they were fulfilled strengthens faith. But to be permitted, with Christ, to view the future is such a rare privilege that none can afford to miss the least word.

We cannot believe, however, that Christ had in mind only to entertain us or to gratify our curiosity. That might be pleasing to us, but Christ had a higher purpose. There was something He wanted us to know, and perhaps also there were some dangers concerning which He wished to caution us. There were certain things for which we should watch, so that when they came to pass we might have our faith strengthened and know of a surety that God has not forgotten this world but that all is proceeding according to plan.

This is in harmony with what Jesus Himself says: "These things have I told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them." And again: "I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, you might believe." John 16:4; 14:29. These two texts admonish us to watch for prophetic fulfillment, and to "remember that I told you of them," and this for the purpose that "you might believe."

Christ's prophecies, therefore, are given to strengthen faith. In view of these words of Christ's, we do well not merely to read but also to study this chapter in the Gospel of Matthew, and then watch events as they occur, remembering that Christ told us "before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass," we "might believe."

When Shall These Things Be?

To refresh our memory, let us quote again the questions of the disciples. As Christ, toward the close of His ministry, "sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Matthew 24:3.

The first question, "When shall these things be?" has reference to the remark Jesus had made as He looked at the Temple buildings: "See you not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Verse 2.

To the disciples it did not seem possible that the mighty stones of the Temple could ever be thrown down. Nearly fifty years the Temple had been in process of construction, and thirty or more years would elapse before it would be finished. And now Jesus calmly stated there would not remain one stone upon another. He had probably not noted how large the stones were, some of them forty or more feet in length and six to eight feet in thickness. Surely such a building would never be thrown down. If it should happen, it would be nothing less than the end of the world. That conception, indeed, may be the reason why in their questions the disciples coupled the end of the world with the destruction of the Temple. If the Temple went down, the world would go with it, they thought.

Warning Against Deception

Jesus now embarks upon an explanation which includes both the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the world. "Take heed," said He, "that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ: and shall deceive many." Verses 4, 5.

This warning was needed then and it is needed now. After Christ's death men arose claiming to be Christ risen from the dead; and ever since men have arisen making similar claims. Be not deceived, Christ says.

'You shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that you be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and you shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another' And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Verses 6-13.

The Master here uses general terms which are applicable to almost any period of history. Wars and rumors of wars, nation rising against nation, famines and earthquakes—all these are ordinary happenings, and He passes over them lightly, without laying special stress on them; He does, however, state that they are the beginning of sorrows.

The fact that Christ does not stress these calamities is in itself interesting and encouraging. He does not want men to do the very thing many are doing—making every war and every disaster a sign of the end, and every temporary despot or dictator an antichrist. He is in effect, saying, These things are ordinary events that are happening all the while. Do not be disturbed by them, or deceived. Wait for the greater signs to come.

Having given this warning, Jesus now changes from events in nature to the fortunes of His people. Persecution will come and hardships of all kinds. Many will be killed for their faith, and there will be a general hatred of Christians and Christianity. (Verse 9.) As a result many will be offended; that is, give up the faith and betray one another and hate one another. Also, "false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Verses 11, 12. However, those who endure to the end will be saved. (Verse 13.)

Persecution

As Christ looked into the future from the viewpoint of the first Christian century, He saw the church gradually losing its early vision and separating into factions, spending its strength in internal warfare rather than in the service of mankind. There were bitter controversies in the early centuries, and these led to bloodshed and persecution, the dominant church party persecuting and harassing the so-called heretical factions, torturing and killing men for differing with them in faith or practice. History bears witness to the fact that not a few only but literally millions of Christians during the early and middle centuries gave their lives for the faith they held dear.

The history of the Catholic Church during those centuries does not make pleasant reading. It ruled, and did as it pleased. One might forgive some of the past and charge it up to the spirit of the times and to ignorance of the principles of Christian and religious liberty; but when the church in these days of enlightenment defends the very principles which in past ages brought torture and death to millions of innocent human beings, one feels compelled to hold the church fully responsible for all that resulted from those teachings of past ages. The pious excuse that it was the state and not the church that was responsible will not hold. A disavowal of the revolting doctrines that made persecution possible would go a long way toward restoring confidence for the future. But when it is boastfully stated that the church never changes, we can only raise a note of warning. There can be no union or fraternization with an organization which stoutly defends the practice of torturing and killing its fellow men on the ground that it alone has the truth, and that it has the duty to destroy its opponents.

When Protestantism arose in the sixteenth century, it might be expected that a change would come and persecution cease. And the prospects were bright, at least for a time. The power of Rome was broken in many lands; but alas, soon Protestantism began using the same tactics which Rome had employed, and liberty vanished. In many lands the state lent its power to the enforcement of

church dogmas, and persecution again resulted. Where before there had been one false prophet, now many arose and deceived many. Sects multiplied, and the confusion only grew worse.

There is no objection to applying the statement, “many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many” to individuals who from time to time flourished and then passed on; however, in prophecies of this kind “false prophets” has reference to movements rather than to individuals. (See Revelation 19:20; 16:13; 20: 10.) We have now hundreds of sects that are attempting to direct men to heaven. Too many of them are false prophets, crying, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace, and leading men astray rather than in the right direction. It is these to which Christ primarily has reference.

Iniquity to Abound

“Because iniquity shall abound.” There is abundant iniquity in the world, but Christ evidently has reference to iniquity in the church. Of this we need not say much. We do not affirm that the sins of the church bear any comparison to the iniquity in the world. Nor do we believe Christ meant to convey this idea, nor does our text as much as suggest it. What it does say is that because iniquity abounds, the love of many shall wax cold.

To some it has seemed that this statement should be inverted to read, “Because the love of many shall wax cold, iniquity shall abound.” That would doubtless also be true, but such is not the reading. It may be that ministers and laity do not always conform to the high Christian standard set for the church, and that because of this some begin to lose faith in religion and in its power to change lives. It may be that some of the laity are noticing how scheming and unworthy men at times attain high office, and that because of this their once ardent love is waning. It behooves the church to see to it that it does not become a stumbling block and an offense.

“But he that shall endure unto the end.” Endure in the original is from the same root as patience, one being the verb, the other the noun. Apparently Jesus had the same group in mind that is brought to view in the book of Revelation, who have “the patience of the saints,” that is, “the endurance of the saints.” Revelation 14:12. Whoever does so endure “the same shall be saved.”

The Preaching of the Gospel a Sign

“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” Matthew 24:14.

It is in immediate connection with this statement of enduring to the end that the prophecy of the preaching of the gospel occurs. In the midst of a church that has grown cold and in which iniquity abounds, there will be some who will endure, who will have patience, who will belong to the group that have “the patience of the saints.... that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” They will not fail or be discouraged. They have a world vision, and through them “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world.” As soon as God's people have finished their work, “then shall the end come.”

At the time Christ announced that the gospel should be preached in all the world, there was little likelihood that such an undertaking could ever be accomplished. The twelve disciples were all the force available for the task, and Christ was about to depart out of the world and leave the task to them. One of the twelve was a devil; another would deny Him with cursing and swearing; and in the approaching crisis they would all forsake Him and flee.

It was not very promising material the Master had for turning the world upside down. As the disciples should start on their mission to convert the world, what success could they expect when their mission consisted in telling the nations that their only hope of heaven was faith in a Jew who had been hanged on a tree as a criminal? Theirs would indeed seem a hopeless task.

All this Christ knew. Yet despite this He quietly announced that “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in -all the world.” What faith! or was it folly and presumption? Time has demonstrated.

The gospel made rapid progress in the early days of Christianity. The world was not so large then as now, but neither were the means of communication as good. Yet in the remarkable time of less than forty years Paul could say that the gospel had been “preached to every creature which is under heaven.” Colossians 1:23.

After the apostles died, the preaching of the gospel made slow progress. The church lost its missionary spirit, became interested in worldly pomp and ostentation, and the people sank back into heathen customs and worldly ambition. For sixteen hundred years little was done for the evangelization of the world, and it seemed that Christ's word would never be fulfilled.

A World Map

If on a map of the world those countries were marked with bright lights where the gospel was preached two hundred years ago, large parts of the map would be shrouded in darkness. Europe and America would be light, but Asia, Africa, great sections of South America, and the islands of the sea would be dark. China with its more than four hundred millions, India with its nearly four hundred millions, the Moslem world with its more than two hundred millions-fully half of the world's total population, would be in nearly total darkness. If we add to these the unnumbered millions of Africa and the islands of the sea and the many millions of South America, about three fourths of the world had not, two hundred years ago, heard the gospel preached to them.

One hundred years ago much had been accomplished, but much also remained to be done. Bible and missionary societies had been organized, and the church was awakening to its world responsibility. Missionaries had been sent to India and China, Japan was being opened, but Africa and the islands of the sea were still untouched. And though some large countries had been entered, very little had as yet been accomplished by the few men sent. The countries had been entered, but not occupied. A hundred years ago much had been done, but much more remained to be done.

Since then rapid strides have been made. The work is yet far from finished, but at least the church has a vision of what needs to be done, and is courageously going forward with its task. I could give statistics of the progress being made, but figures are quite unsatisfactory; and in this case particularly so, for before they would be printed they would be hopelessly out of date.

Suffice to say that the work of preaching the gospel is hastening on apace. And let us not forget that this is a fulfillment of the Savior's prophecy. Wonderful was His faith and vision. Beginning with a few unlearned fishermen, the gospel message has now almost encircled the earth, and soon the work will be done. When that time arrives-and we are nearing it rapidly - "then shall the end come."

Hastening Christ's Coming

This first great sign of Jesus' is a most satisfying one. It is as though Christ said to His church, "You have a work to do. You are praying and waiting for My return. But before I can come you must do your work. As soon as you have done this, I will come." This places a deep responsibility upon the church. Within certain limits we can hasten or delay His coming. It is probably to this Peter has reference when he says: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" 2 Peter 3:11,12. For "basting unto the coming of the day of God," the margin of both the King James and the Revised Version has "hastening the coming." This translation is in harmony with Jesus' statement that when we have done our work, when the gospel shall have been preached in all the world, then shall the end come. According to this, if we are slack in our work, His coming is delayed, and by parity of reason, if we finish our work quickly, His coming will be hastened. In a very real sense, therefore, the work of the church is linked up with the coming of Christ.

A Warning

Here let me offer a word of warning against misinterpreting Christ's words: Some read the text we are considering as if it read that the whole world shall be converted before the Lord comes. This it does not say. I doubt seriously that the time will ever come when the whole world will be converted. No such promise is made anywhere. And our text does not say so. Note again its reading: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Matthew 24:14.

The wording is that the gospel will be preached in all the world, not accepted by all the world. The latter would be an illusive hope, not supported either by Scripture or by experience. No, the gospel will never be accepted by all, but it must be preached to all, and all must be given an opportunity to accept it if they wish. That will leave all without excuse. Although we could wish that the whole world would accept Christ, to many the preaching of the gospel will be only a witness against them. Let Christ's words therefore not be misinterpreted. The gospel is to be preached for a witness unto all men; then shall the end come.

This point cannot be emphasized too strongly, for many are the false hopes based upon a misconception and a misreading. Christ will come, and He will come soon, according to the prophecies; but let no one think that the world will first be converted. Such is a false hope.

We are attracted to this sign of Christ's coming not merely because we have or may have a part in its fulfillment, but because it is a progressive sign-one that is constantly fulfilling and full of interest. Every new country entered, every missionary that is sent out, every dollar given, helps to hasten that glad day. That gives all a deeper interest in home and foreign missions; it makes the work real and purposeful, and gives point to all endeavor.

How many lands still remain closed to the missionary? How many lands are still without the preaching of the gospel? Not very many. And to the few sections of the world still remaining without the pale of the gospel, missionaries are now hastening or preparing to enter as soon as permission is given. Doors are opening everywhere. Even such remote fields as Tibet and related countries are beginning to open their doors, and soon the whole earth will be flooded with the light of the cross.

Finishing the Work

However, the fact that a country has opened its doors to the missionary is no assurance that it has been evangelized. No, there is hard work ahead, and much of it. But we begin to see the end of the task. Let first the doors be opened, and God's people will find a way to go in and possess the land. For years God's people have been praying that certain doors might be opened. And very few are now closed. It may be that the same God who opened the doors has means at hand to take advantage of these openings.

The public press, the religious press, the radio, the airplane, and other modern means stand ready to do a quick work. I am not minimizing the work before the church in reaching the whole world with the gospel in this generation. On the contrary, I am quite aware of the tremendous task ahead. But I also like to think that God has prepared the way for all this. In any strength that men may have it seems an impossible task to preach the Word to a world that has lost its way, and do it in a short time. But God has powers and men in reserve for just such a time as this. And when the time comes the work will quickly be done.

In the installation of an electric lighting system in a city much preparatory work must be done in building power plants, digging holes for erection of poles or ditches for conduits, wiring houses and installing fixtures. A city may work for years and not have a single light to show for its work. But the day will come when the installation is ready, and all that is needed is to push a button or turn a switch, and lo, the whole city is illuminated in a moment.

So in the gospel work years have been consumed in preparatory work. Some of the work may seem as far removed from preaching the gospel as digging a hole in the ground is from providing a city with light. But wait. The time will come when everything will be seen in its right relation. Taking up an offering, sending out a tract or paper, providing young men and women

with an education may seem to have little connection with the coming of the Lord. But it may be, and is, a vital part of the work first to be done.

Speaking in terms of an electric light system we, as a church, have dug about enough holes, erected enough poles, strung enough wires, for the finishing of the work contemplated. About all we need is to get the power plants in operation. For these the foundation has been built, the brick work finished, and the machinery installed. But God must furnish the power, even the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the supreme need of the church. We have seen not a few spiritual power plants with excellent machinery, all in running order. What is needed now is power. As soon as that comes, in a moment of time bright lights will shine all over. May God give the church the power it so sadly needs! When we get that, the work will soon be finished. God is ready to turn on the power.

15. Christ And The Prophet Daniel

WHEN you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (who reads, let him understand.) Matthew 24:15.

In this text Christ makes a remarkable reference to the prophet Daniel. That He refers to him at all is interesting, for Daniel is not one of the popular prophets of the Bible. And Christ not only mentions him but recommends his book, saying, "Who reads, let him understand." Evidently there is something in the book of Daniel that we should know, or Christ would not have told us to attempt to understand it. He counsels us to get the meaning of what we read.

The book of the prophet Daniel is one of the neglected books of the Bible. Christians read the New Testament if they read the Bible at all. Some also read the Psalms or selections from Isaiah. But Daniel is not one of the books that is on the reading list of the average Christian. Yet this is the only book of all the books of the Bible to which Christ calls special attention, and asks us to understand as we read.

The setting of this statement inclines us to the belief that Jesus had in mind to call the attention of believers to the prophecies that deal with His Second Coming. He knew that the time would come when there would be an attack on the Bible, and that even Christians would be negligent of its reading. If the evil one cannot get Christians to ignore the Bible entirely, he can center his attack upon such books as particularly warn us of the dangers that lie ahead. Chief among these books are Daniel and Revelation. It is probably for this reason Jesus picks out the book of Daniel and calls attention to it in connection with the question of His Second Coming, asking men to read and understand it. To the Christian, Christ's slightest wish is a command. We would therefore follow His admonition and read what Daniel has to say, and attempt to understand it.

It is not my purpose, however, to go exhaustively into a study of this book just now. We are at this time especially interested in "the faith of Jesus," and therefore in the questions the disciples asked Christ; so our study will confine itself to statements that bear directly upon the time of the end.

In examining the book we find several prophecies dealing with the future. There is one statement, however, which particularly attracts us as it uses the very phraseology in which we are interested. It is found in the last chapter of the book, and reads as follows:

"Thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Daniel 12A.

Note this text carefully. It states that at "the time of the end" "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." The expression "time of the end" evidently refers to a little time prior to the coming of the Lord. It is not "the end of time," for that would be the very end, but "time of the end," a time when the end is very near. It is at this time that knowledge shall be increased. This cannot be an ordinary, normal growth of knowledge, but is a development so remarkable as to constitute a sign.

When, in the last chapter, we discussed Christ's prediction that the gospel of the kingdom was to be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations, and that "then shall the end come," we came to the conclusion that we are now living in the time when this particular prophecy is being fulfilled. The statement in the book of Daniel in regard to the increase of knowledge adds another bit of information to what we know already, for the last days will be marked not only by the carrying of the gospel to all the world but also by an increase of knowledge that will in itself be so pronounced as to be mentioned by prophecy as a sign.

A Remarkable Time

That the present is a remarkable time is clear to all, a time of knowledge such as the world has never seen. For hundreds - one might even say thousands---of years after Daniel made his prediction there was little if any advance in general knowledge. A hundred years ago men tilled the soil, sowed and reaped the grain, in exactly the same manner they did two thousand years ago. A hundred years ago men traveled from place to place exactly as they did twenty-five hundred years ago when Daniel lived. Horses and oxen or other pack animals were the only means of locomotion in George Washington's time, as in Nebuchadnezzar's. Medical science bled patients a century ago as they did when Alexander the Great lived. There had been but little general advance. Science was just waking up and stretching itself in the beginning of the last century, but there was no inkling of what the future held in store. In fact, go back two hundred years, and there was little progress to show for two thousand years of existence. True, there had been advance in certain lines and some ground work had been done, but from a general view of the situation it is clear that had the world kept advancing at the speed it was going from the time of Daniel to the beginning of the nineteenth century, it would have taken millions of years for it to make the advance it has made in the last hundred and fifty years. Perhaps we do not fully appreciate that this time is marked out by prophecy.

Only about a hundred years ago it was seriously proposed to close the United States Patent Office for the reason that everything worth while had been invented. Money could be used to better advantage than for the support of such an office. I am well aware that the number of inventions does not necessarily measure a nation's real progress; but I am also aware that inventions that mean as much to civilization as have the inventions of the last century cannot be ignored in any appraisal of the present time.

Discoveries and Inventions

A list of a few of the many modern discoveries and marvelous scientific and mechanical inventions will loudly affirm that we have come to a new time. This list must necessarily be very incomplete, for thousands upon thousands are the discoveries and inventions of the last century which could rightly be included, but cannot be because of lack of space. The reader must make his own complete tabulation of the things which to him appear important.

1.The Steam Engine. Only a little more than a century ago did the first steam locomotive make its appearance. We need not elaborate upon the changes which this invention has brought about in the lives of the people. Though steam may be superseded by new and better means both of locomotion and power, wonderful is the effect that it has had on lives and civilization.

2.Electricity. Many now living remember the time before electricity came into common use. Within the last century men have used pine splinters, tallow candles, kerosene lamps, gas lights, and at last electricity for light. The discovery of electricity and the uses to which it can be put have opened new vistas that we probably have not begun either to appreciate or to explore.

3.Telegraph. "What hath God wrought!" was the first message sent in 1844. And indeed ., what has God wrought, and what influence has not the telegraph had upon life in general! The first oceanic cable united Europe and America and made it possible to out speed the sun, so, as was a common saying, we in America learned of what happened in Europe hours before it happened.

4.Telephone. The transmission of the human voice from one point to another by means of a copper wire was one of the miracles of the time. That a person could actually hear the voice of another person several miles away seemed unbelievable. Even non-Christians were impressed, and began to feel that if a man could be heard by another man at a distance of many miles, perhaps there might be some reason for the Christian's unique contention that God can hear a man when he prays.

5.Radio. Even a blasé world that had refused to be astonished or surprised by anything that might happen was thrilled when out of the night and darkness came an S O S call from a ship at sea, and the first rescue was made possible by the newly invented radio. How men watched to learn the details of this first use of the radio in saving lives! And what an event in the history of the world as mankind listened to the story of a flight over the south pole transmitted from the plane as it sailed over the pole! Or the report of a "stunt" artist as he dashed headlong toward earth with his parachute as yet unopened recording his sensations as he descended! Or the voice of the pope, or the king of England, or the President of the United States!

6.Television. Unlimited possibilities seem to be before this newest of wireless miracles. It bids fair to be one of the most important of latter-day miracles.

7.X-rays and other rays. I mention these because of the promise they give of opening up new and entirely distinct fields for research. Already much has been done, but new uses and adaptations are continually discovered, and we seem to be on the eve of newer and greater achievements.

8.Matches. In my youth I heard my elders tell of the times when they had to go to the neighbors, at times miles away, to borrow fire if by chance something had happened so that the fire on the hearth had gone out. I was much impressed by this, for in some way I had the impression that matches had always existed, or, as one young man expressed it, that matches were created when the world was created. Although matches do not belong in a list of great achievements, by way of contrast it may be well to mention some little thing, which when it was first invented was considered one of the greatest boons that had ever come to mankind.

9.Sewing machines. I do not mention this minor invention because it means much to many who read this-for now garments of all kinds can be bought ready-made everywhere, and sewing machines may not seem vital as a household essential-but in the days when women spun all the yarn needed, and all garments were made by hand, a sewing machine came as a gift from heaven. It liberated millions of women and thus became a vital factor in the new status of womanhood.

10.Farm machinery. It is a long cry from the old cradle used for harvesting to the new combines that do all the work, from cutting the grain to threshing and sacking it, with one machine. Farming one hundred years ago was carried on practically as it was four thousand years ago.

11.Trolley cars. It seems almost strange to place trolley cars in this list as though they were worthy of any special mention. But those who remember the old horse-drawn cars will appreciate the change which this modest invention brought to isolated communities.

12.Typesetting machines. The modern newspaper is made possible by the typesetting machines by which columns can be set in a fraction of the time formerly necessary. Added to the new printing presses that produce thousands of copies an hour, they make possible modern magazines and newspapers with a circulation of millions. Though radio has invaded the field of news service, the newspaper bids fair to keep the hold it has on the public. It has been a mighty agency in the dissemination of knowledge.

13.Photography. A fad with many, photography serves a definite purpose in the present civilization. Events are recorded, phenomena too quick for the human eye to catch are imprisoned on the film, enemy positions are located, land is surveyed, stars are examined, and a thousand other things are done that could never be accomplished without the aid of the photographic plate. If to this we add the possibilities of the motion pictures, we have a most interesting and even phenomenal achievement that will continue to increase in usefulness.

14.Airplanes. In a book printed in 1912 we find the following: “The conquest of the air which has been achieved by the airplane, is one of the most noteworthy triumphs of any age. It is now possible to travel through the air from one city to another, hundreds of miles away, without a stop, and at a speed of over sixty miles an hour. Dirigible air ships also have been constructed which can carry a score of passengers at a time, over long distances at the speed of the average railway train.” We need make no comment on this, what with jet and other planes exceeding the speed of sound.

15.War armaments. The weapons developed and used in the first World War were so effective that it did not seem possible to construct more efficient means of destruction. But what have we not seen since that time! From jeeps to armored tanks of colossal size there has been advance all along the line. With improved bomb sights “block busters” can be placed with uncanny accuracy on small targets from an altitude of tens of thousands of feet. The destruction of a whole city has been effected by one atom bomb. And we are still on the march.

16.Explosives. When dynamite was first discovered it was considered the height of explosive possibility. Many were its peacetime uses; and as a road builder and a means of clearing away obstructions in mines, as well as in many other ways it has done a great work for civilization, and made constructions possible that could not well be done any other way. But compared with modern explosives, dynamite now seems quite weak and harmless. Without explosives of a much more violent nature than dynamite, modern war could not be carried on. It is to be hoped that peacetime uses for these means of destruction will compensate in some small way for the destruction they have wrought.

17.Automobiles. Few inventions have altered life more than the lowly automobile. For thousands of years animals were practically the only means of land locomotion. As far back as we have any historical records the horse stands out prominently as the symbol of speed. Now, in this generation, a new thing has happened. First the railroad for mass transportation, and then the automobile for individual and family Use.

18.Microscopes and telescopes. New worlds have been opened by the improvements in optical instruments. Telescopes have penetrated millions of light years into the vast recesses of the universe and revealed new glories and wonders, and the recent two-hundred-inch Palomar telescope will go still farther. Microscopes have discovered causes of diseases and also means of combating them.

19.Scientific apparatus. These are multitudinous and important. The possibilities of such inventions as the atom smashing machine and radar seem limitless. A mere enumeration of these apparatuses would fill a large catalogue.

20.Anesthesia and surgery. The discovery of anesthesia was the beginning of a new era in the study and practice of medicine. Only a few years ago physicians stood helpless over a simple case of the inflammation of the appendix, or the removal of a tumor. Now, hardly anything is beyond the reach of the surgeon. Increase of knowledge in the practice of medicine and surgery is one of the most outstanding of achievements of the present age.

A Backward Look

As stated above, this list is very incomplete. But it is well that we call to mind some of the outstanding achievements and thus sense better that this age is indeed unusual. There are times when it is necessary to look back in order to orient oneself. The present is such a time. Let us take a look.

What would we do today if we had to get along as did our forefathers, without washing machines, refrigerators, gas or electric stoves, electric light, matches, or those thousands of handy little “gadgets” that are in daily use? What would we do without telegraphs, telephones, radios, busses, streetcars, automobiles, elevators, gas engines of all kinds, plows, or combines for harvesting? What would we do without steamships, airplanes, precision instruments, surgical apparatus, road making machinery, suspension bridges, running water, or sanitary arrangements?

We would get along, of course, and in some respects we might even be better off than now. Nevertheless, when we think of men and soldiers dying for want of a little knowledge of sanitation; of surgeons operating during the War Between the States-without ether or chloroform or any other pain-deadening drug; of George Washington being bled when a blood transfusion might have been better; of houses without windows or chimneys or other modern comforts; of men, women, and children toiling long hours and in discomfort to provide what is now being done in a few minutes by the help of machinery, we are not so sure that we wish the “good old days” back again. The wise man of old said once, “Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou does not inquire wisely concerning this.” Ecclesiastes 7: 10.

General Research

If there has been an amazing increase of knowledge in scientific and technical fields, the increase has been no less pronounced in general fields of endeavor. The last hundred years has witnessed a sharp rise in literacy among practically all nations. Schools and colleges have been increasing at a rapid rate, and where fifty years ago the general educational level in this country was in the lower grades, few parents are now satisfied unless their children finish at least high school. Newspapers, magazines, books, radio-these have all shared in raising the standard of education till it is higher now, and education more widespread, than ever before.

If we consider the many fields of research carried on under grants and bequests of public-minded citizens, and the large forces in the employ of public utilities or private corporations, there are literally hundreds of thousands of individuals engaged in the pursuit of knowledge. To these agencies much credit is due for the phenomenal advance in science and medicine, and the future promises still greater things.

Biblical Knowledge

There has been a remarkable advance in the sciences in general, and there has been corresponding progress in Biblical knowledge. Men have a better understanding of the Bible and of prophecy now than in past ages. This is true of the learned scholar, but also among the common people has knowledge greatly increased, and the distribution of the Scriptures has grown to unprecedented heights. Some time ago the Bible societies announced that the Bible in whole or in part was now printed in one thousand languages. That number has since then been exceeded, and progress is more rapid than ever.

But not only has Bible knowledge in general been greatly increased. Research in ancient languages, digging in the sites of ancient civilization, deciphering of inscriptions on monuments, have immeasurably added to the sum total of Biblical lore. We know today more of ancient civilizations and customs than any previous generation, and are thus better able to understand passages in the Bible and prophecies than our forefathers.

Any unbiased person viewing in perspective the events and conditions of this twentieth century can come to no other conclusion than that this time stands apart from all other times and centuries in a phenomenal increase of knowledge, not in one line only, but in all. With Daniel's statement in mind that at the time of the end there should be such an increase, we can today see the fulfillment of his prediction. Earth, sea, and sky unite in proclaiming this the time of which prophecy speaks.

If we now place the two statements of the preaching of the gospel and increase of knowledge side by side, we have a double confirmation that we are nearing the time of which Christ spoke. The gospel is now being preached to nearly the whole world. When that work is finished "then shall the end come." Also, when we come to the time of the end, knowledge shall be increased. This we see fulfilled before our eyes. We are therefore on sure ground when on the basis of these two prophetic statements we proclaim our belief that we are nearing the time when we may expect our Lord. We do not know the day or the hour. All we know is that the time is nearing.

A Gentle Rebuke by Christ

Upon a certain occasion Christ was addressing the people, giving them some good counsel. In the midst of His remarks He chided them for their lack of appreciation of the times in which they were living.

"He said also to the people, When you see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway you say, There comes a shower; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, There will be heat; and it comes to pass. You hypocrites, you can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that you do not discern this time?" Luke 12:54-56.

"How is it that you do not discern this time?" How appropriate is this rebuke to every generation that has ever lived! We can look back and appraise past events. We can forecast rain and good weather; we can discern the face of the sky. "How is it," says Christ, "that you do not discern this time?" He is in effect saying that anyone who can tell when the south wind blows that "there will be heat," should be able to discern the signs of the times, or more particularly, "this time." From this we would draw the conclusion that discerning the times is not something that can be done by only a select few. The signs are so clear that anyone who can tell that there will be a shower when he sees "a cloud rise out of the west," is also able to discern "this time."

We believe these words of Christ to be a reproof to one and all. He is disappointed that men do not discern the times. He has made the prophecies so clear that there is no reason why people should not be able to appraise the present times. Could it be that we are failing to comprehend this time, the very time which Christ had in mind? Perhaps Christ's rebuke includes us.

16. Solemn Events

WHEN you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (who reads, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray you that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day." Matthew 24:15-20.

This section deals with the period preceding the destruction of Jerusalem, which in many respects is prophetic of the period just preceding the coming of the Lord. We shall touch only briefly on this, as our special interests lie with that part of the prophecy which deals with the last days.

Matthew says, "When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation . . . stand in the holy place, . . . then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains." Matthew 24:15, 16. Luke, in interpreting this, says, "When you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies.... then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains." Luke 21:20, 21.

The Fall of Jerusalem

This identifies the "abomination of desolation" with Rome and her armies, and it also states that the Christians are to flee when the Roman armies encompass the city. This would seem an impossibility. If they were to flee, the time to do so would be before the armies surrounded the city. However, the events justified the counsel given.

We do not know how many Christian Jews were in Jerusalem at the time of the Roman conquest, but we know that a few years previously there were "many thousands." (Acts 21:20.) It was therefore no inconsiderable number who were to flee at the Roman approach. This they did. Suddenly the Roman army appeared before the gates, but shortly afterward again withdrew, giving the Christians the necessary time to flee. According to history, not one Christian perished in the siege.

“Pray you that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day.” This request reveals God's concern for the welfare of His people. He does not want them to suffer unnecessarily, nor does He want them to forget their religion even under war conditions. He did not forbid the Christians to flee in the winter, nor did He forbid them to flee on the Sabbath. But He asks them to pray that this may not be the case. This advice contains a principle which God's people well may study.

If the Christians in Jerusalem prayed during the forty years as Christ counseled them to do, and kept themselves in readiness to flee at a moment's notice and leave all behind, they would not attempt to acquire a great deal of property or other wealth that could not readily be turned into cash. If for forty years they prayed about the Sabbath they would not be guilty of forgetting it. The words, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” would have a special meaning for them. In fact, Christ's admonition to pray about the Sabbath, is merely another way of saying “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” In this admonition Christ was calling the attention of the Christians to the fourth commandment, asking them not to forget it. This is significant as reaching seventy years into the Christian Era. Would Christ thus have instructed them to pray about the Sabbath if it had been abolished?

For the sake of accuracy it may be well to record that although Christ urged the Christians to flee and not go back to get anything, in reality ample time was given them; many months intervened between the time of the withdrawal of the Roman army and its return. Unless the people deliberately chose to flee in the winter or on the Sabbath day, there was no need for them to do so. Christ warned them and asked them to pray about it. At the same time He so ordered events that there would be little hardship if they followed His directions.

The Great Tribulation

“Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.” Matthew 24:21,22.

There have been many persecutions since the days of Christ. Great were the hardships of the apostles and the apostolic church in Palestine. Great were the hardships of the Christians under the early Roman emperors. In many lands and at different periods God's people have suffered much. But there is only one persecution that can rightfully be called the “the great tribulation.” That is the prolonged and persistent and cruel persecution carried on by Rome and the Roman Church. This embraced many smaller and local persecutions throughout the centuries, but in its totality included Christians wherever found and by whatever name they were called. It began in the later apostolic age and continued through the long middle ages-which included the Dark Ages-and lasted till well into the eighteenth century. It was long and hard and cruel, and well deserves the name of the “great tribulation.”

To us who are living in the twentieth century, it may seem strange that there was a time when men did not have the right to worship as they pleased. Religious liberty is a new conception which only lately has gained recognition. Religious persecution has been the rule rather than the exception through recorded history. It is to be hoped that we have seen the last of religious oppression.

Practical religious liberty was attained in Europe and in the United States only a little while before the beginning of the eighteenth century. By that time nations had come to the conclusion that it was impossible to make all men believe alike, and that the sensible thing was to let each man choose to worship his God in whatever way he chose, if by doing so he did not interfere with the equal rights of others. Men discovered that their religious differences did not necessarily affect their capacity to give loyal support to their government. Yet, to many this seemed a new and dangerous doctrine. But it worked in practice.

Religious Liberty

Although the principle of the separation of church and state did not originate in America, it was in the United States that it was first incorporated in the fundamental law of the land. There had been edicts of toleration before. But the United States went further than mere toleration. It asserted the inherent right of man, any man, to worship or not to worship, according to the dictates of his own conscience. It asserted as a principle that man was accountable only to God for his religion, and that no man or group of men was great or good enough to rule over another man's conscience. And so in the United States was erected a state without a king and a church without a pope. Religious liberty was guaranteed to all.

This principle of religious freedom is diametrically opposed to the principles upon which the papal church is founded and upon which it operates to this day. The church believes itself to be the custodian of the only true religion, and feels under obligation to propagate its doctrines not merely by persuasion but by compulsion. Such doctrine may seem to some an anachronism in the twentieth century, but not to the devout Roman Catholic. His religion not only causes him to conform his own life to the rules of the church, but also demands of him the use of force to compel others to yield obedience to the ecclesiastical hierarchy. In this philosophy lies the reason of past persecutions, and there is no ground for believing that the church has changed its views. Rather, the opposite is true. It is remarkable with what frankness the Catholic Church proclaims its adherence to the old doctrine of the union of church and state-with the church in the ascendancy-and asserts its right and intention to use such means as it thinks best for the execution of its aim. And we have had abundant proof of what those means are.

To the average Protestant such doctrine seems incomprehensible and almost unbelievable. He wonders how anyone can claim to be a Christian and yet believe in torturing and persecuting his fellow men. Such an attitude, however, is not new but has been held throughout the ages. Was not Paul himself a persecutor? Did he not hale men to prison? Did he not consent to the death of Stephen? And did he not think that he was doing God service?

The unusual thing about the Catholic Church is not that individual men have persecuted but that a church, after full consideration of the matter and in the full knowledge of Christ's teaching, deliberately includes in its official teaching that of the

correction of heretics, which includes the punishment, torture, and death of unrepentant transgressors of ecclesiastical pronouncements. Such seems entirely inconsistent with Christianity, and not only seems, but is.

It is the principle here enunciated that caused the “great tribulation” of which Christ speaks. As mentioned above, there have been many persecutions through the centuries, but none that can be compared in length, severity, or planned constancy and cruelty with the long papal persecution of more than fifteen centuries. Never before or since has any organization deliberately set out to root out of existence all opposition to itself, and continued its course for centuries without change of motive. A dictator may arise and for a few years practice and prosper. But he comes to his end and new conditions prevail. In the case of the Papacy we are face to face with an institution that has as its avowed purpose the extermination of all religions except its own, as well as the extermination of all adherents to such religions as do not recant after due admonition.

We stand astounded and perplexed at a church calling itself Christian, who still defends the taking of millions of lives through torture, burning at the stake and inhuman detention in dungeons and caves of the earth. It was indeed a tribulation the like of which “was not since the beginning of the world to this time,” and, thank God, “no, nor ever shall be.”

A Massacre as a Sample

“Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved.” It was with reluctance that I came to the conclusions here set forth. I hesitated to believe that any so called Christian organization could be guilty of the activities of which one reads in history. I felt that it must all be a horrible mistake and that there was some other explanation for the ages upon ages of persecution and horror. But the documents of the church itself at last convinced me of the application of Christ's prophecy to the papal persecution, and revealed the principles that would make possible Christ's statement that unless the days of tribulation should be shortened no one would escape.

A sample of what the church had in mind was shown in the plan for the extermination of every Protestant in France on the night of that infamous Massacre of St. Bartholemew. Had the plan been completely successful, not one Protestant in France would have escaped. And now Christ reveals that an even more diabolical scheme was in contemplation. This scheme, Christ says, involved the whole world. Not a soul would have been saved had not God interfered. But in mercy the days of persecution were shortened, and God's people saved. It does not fall within my purview to discuss this further.

Though no exact date can be set for the end of the “great tribulation,” it will not be incorrect to say that it was in the latter part of the eighteenth century that the persecution ceased. It was about 1775 that the last martyr was burned at the stake.

The Manner of Christ's Coming

If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.” Matthew 24:23-26.

Christ in His discourse is coming nearer to our time. As in the days immediately following the crucifixion, false prophets arose and deceived many (verse 11), so as we are nearing the time of the end not only false prophets but false christs will arise who “shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” Christ counsels us, however, not to believe when they say, “Lo, here is Christ, or there.” if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.”

The reason we are not to believe or be deceived by these calls is given in the following verse. “For as the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” Verse 27.

To this matter reference has already been made. This verse does not speak of any secret coming. In fact, it is in disproof of a secret coming that Christ mentions it. His coming is compared to the lightning, which shines from the east even to the west. Let us therefore consider the manner of Christ's coming forever settled. It is to be as visible as the lightning, and “every eye shall see Him.” Revelation 1:7 If some should attempt to convince us that Christ has come, we can in all

272 The Faith of Jesus

honesty object on the ground that we have not seen Him, and that therefore it cannot be so. For “Every eye shall see him,” and we are included in “every.”

“Where so ever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” Matthew 24:28. This verse has been the subject of much discussion as to its meaning. I take it simply to refer to the many false christs and false prophets that shall arise. As a carcass lying in the field attracts all kinds of unclean birds to the feast of putrefying meat, so these false prophets have a dead carcass, a false christ, about whom they gather. It is not a very beautiful picture, but thus Christ depicts those who teach false doctrines.

17. Some Signs Of Christ's Coming

IMMEDIATELY after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” Matthew 24:29, 30.

The last chapter discussed the “great tribulation” which should be so severe that if it were not shortened, no flesh should be saved. Immediately after the tribulation the sun would be darkened, the moon would not give her light, and the stars were to fall from heaven. That this is to take place near the end of time is evident from verse 30, which says that “then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven. And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

In the discussion of the time of the ending of the great tribulation I stated that though I could not give the exact date for the end of the persecution, it was not far from 1775. This date is approximately correct. It fits in a remarkable way with the statement that immediately after the tribulation the sun will be darkened; for it was in 1780 that a most remarkable phenomenon took place, which appears to be the very sign of which Christ spoke.

Signs in the Sun, Moon, and Stars

What took place then was not a mere solar eclipse. Of these there have been many, and they are predictable. To fulfill the specifications of a sign so that people would recognize it as a sign-and without this it would fail to accomplish its purpose-it must be so out of the ordinary that all would recognize its peculiar nature. Of just this nature was the darkening of the sun on the nineteenth day of May, 1780. I shall quote a few of the contemporary comments on the occurrence.

1n the month of May, 1780, there was a very terrific dark day in New England, when all faces seemed to gather blackness, and the people were filled with fear. There was great distress in the village where Edward Lee lived, men's hearts failing them with fear that the judgment-day was at hand; and the neighbors all flocked around the holy man, [who] spent the gloomy hours in earnest prayer for the distressed multitude.”-Some Memorials of Edward Lee, American Tract Society, Publications, vol. 11, p. 376, Tract No. 379, p. 8.

“Candles were lighted in many houses; the birds were silent and disappeared, and the fowls retired to roost. . . . A very general opinion prevailed that the day of judgment was at hand.”-TIMOTHY DWIGHT in Connecticut Historical Collections (1836 ed.), p. 403.

“The cocks were crowing all around, as at break of day; objects could not be distinguished but at a very little distance; and everything bore the appearance and gloom of night.” SAMUEL WILLIAMS in Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, vol. 1, page 235.

“Woodcocks which are night birds, whistled as they do only in the dark: Frogs peeped-In short, there was the appearance of midnight at noon-day.... I found the people at the tavern near by very much agitated. “-Letter from “Viator,” in The Continental Journal and Weekly Advertiser (Boston), May 25, 1780, p. 2. The poet Whittier speaks thus of this event:

“It was on a May-day of the far old year Seventeen hundred eighty, that there fell Over the bloom and sweet life of the Spring, Over the fresh earth and the heaven of noon, A horror of great darkness, like the night

In day of which the Norland sagas tell,

The Twilight of the Gods. The low-hung sky

Was black with ominous clouds, save where its rim

Was fringed with a dull glow, like that which climbs The crater's sides from the red hell below.

Birds ceased to sing, and all the barnyard fowls Roosted; the cattle at the pasture bars

Lowed, and looked homeward; bats on leather wings flitted abroad; the sounds of labor died;

Men prayed, and women wept; all ears grew sharp To hear the doom-blast of the trumpet shatter

The black sky, that the dreadful face of Christ Might look from the rent clouds, not as he looked A loving guest at Bethany, but stern As justice and inexorable Law.”

-“Abraham Davenport,” in Complete Poetical Works (1894), p. 260.

The following night the sign in the moon took place. On this we quote the following comments from persons living at the time: “The darkness of the following evening was probably as gross as ever has been observed since the Almighty fiat gave birth to light. . . . I could not help conceiving at the time that if every luminous body in the universe had been shrouded in impenetrable shades, or struck out of existence, the darkness could not have been more complete. A sheet of white paper held within a few inches of the eyes was equally invisible with the blackest velvet.”-Letter of Dr. Samuel Tenney, Exeter, N. Fl., December, 1785, in Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, part 1, vol. I (1792), pp. 97, 98.

“Nor was the darkness of the night less uncommon and terrifying than that of the day; notwithstanding there was almost a full moon.” -Thomas's Massachusetts Spy, cited in The Independent Chronicle (Boston), June 8, 1780.

The sign in the stars occurred in 1833. Then a most remarkable display of falling stars took place, sufficiently unusual and extraordinary to constitute a sign. Here are some of the comments on this occurrence:

Denison Ohnsted, in The Mechanism of the Heavens, says:

“The attention of astronomers was particularly directed to this subject by the extraordinary shower of meteors which occurred on the morning of the thirteenth of November 1833. I had the good fortune to witness these grand celestial fireworks, and felt a strong desire that a phenomenon, which, as it afterwards appeared, was confined chiefly to North America, should command that diligent inquiry into its causes, which so sublime a spectacle might justly claim.... I will endeavor to give some faint idea of it, as it appeared to

a little before daybreak. Let the reader, then, imagine a constant succession of fire-balls, resembling sky-rockets, radiating in all directions from a point in the heavens a few degrees south-east of the zenith, and following the arch of the sky towards the horizon. They commenced their progress at different distances from the radiating point; but their directions were uniformly such, that the lines they described, if produced upwards, would all have met in the same part of the heavens. Around this point, or imaginary radiant, was a circular space of several degrees, within which no meteors were observed. The balls, as they traveled down the vault, usually left after them a vivid streak of light, and, just before they disappeared, exploded, or suddenly resolved themselves into smoke. No report of any kind was observed, although we listened attentively.

“Beside the foregoing distinct concretions or individual bodies, the atmosphere exhibited phosphoric lines, following in the train of minute points, that shot off in the greatest abundance in a northwesterly direction. These did not so fully copy the figure of the sky, but moved in paths more nearly rectilinear, and appeared to be much nearer the spectator than the fire-balls. The light of their trains was also of a paler hue, not unlike that produced by writing with a stick of phosphorus on the walls of a dark room. The number of these luminous trains increased and diminished alternately, now and then crossing the field of view, like snow drifted before the wind, although, in fact, their course was towards the wind.

“From these two varieties, we were presented with meteors of various sizes and degrees of splendor. Some were mere points, while others were larger and brighter than Jupiter or Venus; and one, seen by a credible witness, at an earlier hour, was judged to be nearly as large as the moon. The flashes of light, although less intense than lightning, were so bright, as to awaken people in their beds. One ball that shot off in the north west direction, and exploded a little northward of the star Capella, left, just behind the place of explosion, a phosphorescent train of peculiar beauty. This train was at first nearly straight, but it shortly began to contract in length, to dilate in breadth, and to assume the figure of a serpent drawing itself up, until it appeared like a small luminous cloud of vapor. This cloud was borne eastward (by the wind, as was supposed, which was blowing gently in that direction), opposite to the direction in which the meteor itself had moved, remaining in sight several minutes. The point from which the meteors seemed to radiate kept a fixed position among the stars, being constantly near a star in Leo, called Gamma Leonis.

“Such is a brief description of this grand and beautiful display as I saw it at New Haven. The newspapers shortly brought intelligence of similar appearances in all parts of the United States, and many minute descriptions were published by various observers; from which it appeared that the exhibition had been marked by very nearly the same characteristics wherever it had been seen. Probably no celestial phenomenon has ever occurred in America, since its first settlement, which was viewed with so much admiration and delight by one class of spectators, or with so much astonishment and fear by another class. .

“After collecting and collating the accounts given in all the periodicals of the country, and also in numerous letters addressed either to my scientific friends or to myself, the following appeared to be the leading facts attending the phenomenon. The shower pervaded nearly the whole of North America, having appeared in nearly equal splendor from the British possessions on the north, to the West India Islands and Mexico on the south, and from sixty one degrees of longitude east of the American coast, quite to the Pacific Ocean on the west. Throughout this immense region, the duration was nearly the same. The meteors began to attract attention by their unusual frequency and brilliancy, from nine to twelve o'clock in the evening; were most striking in their appearance from two to five; arrived at their maxim, in many places, about four o'clock; and continued until rendered invisible by the light of day. The meteors moved either in right lines, or in such apparent curves, as upon optical principles, can be resolved into right lines. Their general tendency was towards the north-west, although, by the effect of perspective, they appeared to move in various directions. Such were the leading phenomena of the great meteoric show of November 13, 1833.” - Pages 325-328.

“Accordingly, from the year 1830, when the meteoric shower of November was first observed, until 1833, there was a regular increase of the exhibition; in 1833, it came to its maximum; and after that time it was repeated upon a constantly diminishing scale.” - Page 341. An article attributed to Henry Dana Ward gave the following impressions:

“In your paper this morning, some notice is taken of the phenomenon of yesterday. It comes so far short of the view taken of it by myself and a number of friends who gazed upon it with me, that I send you the story of that eventful scene, as we witnessed it.

“One of the family arose at 5 o'clock, A. M. to prepare for leaving the city in the seven o'clock boat. He threw up the window to see whether the dawn had come, and, behold, the East was lighted up, and the heavens were apparently falling. He rubbed his eyes first in doubt; but seeing on every side the starry firmament, as if it were broken up, and falling like the flakes of snow and whitening the skies, he aroused the whole family. At the cry, 'Look out of the window,' I sprang from a deep sleep, and with wonder saw the East lighted up with the dawn, and METEORS. The zenith, the North and West, also showed the falling stars, in the very image of one thing, and of only one, I ever heard of. I called to my wife to behold; and while robing, she exclaimed: 'See how the stars fall!' I replied, 'That is the wonder;' and we felt in our hearts, that it was a sign of the last days. For, truly, 'the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree castes her untimely figs, when she is shaken by a mighty wind'-Revelation 6:13. This language of the prophet has always been received as metaphorical. Yesterday it was literally fulfilled. The ancients understood by aster in Greek, and stella in Latin, the smaller lights of heaven. The refinement of modern astronomy has made the distinction between stars of heaven and meteors of heaven. Therefore, the idea of the prophet, as it is expressed in the original Greek, was literally fulfilled in the phenomenon of yesterday, so as no man before yesterday had conceived to be possible that it should be fulfilled. The immense size and distance of the planets and fixed stars forbid the idea of their falling unto the earth. Larger bodies cannot fall in myriads unto a smaller body. But most of the planets, and all the fixed stars, are many times, many, larger than our earth. They cannot fall unto the earth. But these fell toward the earth.

“And how did they fall? Neither myself nor one of the family heard any report; and were I to hunt through nature for a simile, I could not find one so apt to illustrate the appearance of the heavens as that which St. John uses in the prophecy, before quoted. 'It rained fire!' says one-Another, 'it was like a shower of fire.' Another, 'it was like the large flakes of falling snow, before a coming storm, or large drops of rain before a shower.' I admit the fitness of these for common accuracy; but they come far short of the accuracy of the

figure used by the prophet. 'The stars of heaven fell unto the earth;' they were not sheets, or flakes, or drops of fire; but they were what the world understands by the name of 'Falling Stars;' and one speaking to his fellow in the midst of the scene, would say; 'See how the stars fall;' and he who heard, would not pause to correct the astronomy of the speaker, any more than he would reply, 'I the sun does not move,' to one who should tell him, 'the sun is rising. The stars fell 'Even as a fig tree castes her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.' Here is the exactness of the prophet. The falling stars did not come, as if from several trees shaken, but from one: those which appeared in the east fell toward the East; those which appeared in the north fell toward the North. Those which appeared in the west fell toward the West, and those which appeared in the south, (for I went out of my residence into the Park,) fell toward the South; and they fell, not as the ripe fruit falls. Far from it. But they flew, they WERE CAST, like the unripe fruit, which at first refuses to leave the branch; and, when it does break its hold, flies swiftly, strait off, descending; and in the multitude falling some cross the track of others, as they are thrown with more or less force. Such was the appearance of the above phenomenon to the inmates of my house. I walked into the Park with two gentlemen of Pearl Street, feeling and confessing, that this scene had never been figured to our minds by any book or mortal, save only by the prophet. What should be next, we were at a loss to conceive, consistent with the usual course of events. We asked the watchman, how long this had been? He said: 'About four o'clock it was thickest.' We gazed, until the rising sun put out the lesser falling stars with the lesser fixed stars; and until the morning star stood alone in the East, to introduce the bright orb of day. And here take the remark of one of my friends in mercantile life, who is as well informed in polite learning, as most intelligent merchants of our city, who have not made science their study. Sitting down to breakfast, we spoke of the scene; and he said, 'I kept my eyes fixed on the morning star. I thought while that stood firm, we were safe; but I feared every moment that would go, and all would go with it.' Be assured, Messrs. Editors, this was the language of nature, in full flow of feeling, just after an hour's watch of the magnificent scene; and was met with an open response of approbation from other intelligent eyewitnesses. The reader will see that this remark proceeded from an almost irresistible impression of intelligent eye-witnesses, that the firmament had given way, that the whole host of stars had broken up, yet hope clung to the bright morning star: which never appeared more glorious.

In this narrative I have spoken not of causes, but of appearances, and the appearances according to the impression they made on men. I know not how to convey a more accurate notion of them; and yet some will say, 'It is fanciful.' Such may know my opinion, that no fancy is adequate to realize with any description the solemn interest of the scene; and that it required no fancy to heighten the picture, but a sound, well informed, and enlightened reason to check the fancy, and to restrain it from running headlong into the idea of the thing which this scene is made in the prophecy to prognosticate. Men will say, 'Where is the promise of his coming; for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation,' 2 Peter 3A. See the 10th verse of the same: 'But the day of the Lord will come'-and, although with him a thousand years is as one day, and one day as a thousand years, it is wise to learn from the teachings of his Providence and of his word. No Philosopher or scholar has told or recorded an event, like that of yesterday morning. A 'Prophet of 1800 years ago foretold it exactly, if we will be at the trouble of understanding stars falling, to mean falling-stars: or 'hoi asteres tou ouranou epesan eis tean gean' in the only sense in which it is possible to be literally true.-Would I stop all business?-No: 'be diligent in business,' is the Apostle's word, and that must stand.

I will not speculate. Natural causes undoubtedly produced this phenomenon, and the same will probably produce the scene to which the world is reserved.

"[Lest it should be supposed that we concur with our correspondent in the view he has taken of this phenomenon, we will just say that we do not; although we readily admit the ingenuity of his argument. All such exhibitions of Divine power are fitted to convey instruction, if the mind is disposed to receive it, but beyond this, it is somewhat dangerous to go.] -EDS. J. G"- Journal of Commerce (New York), Saturday, Nov. 14, 1833 (vol. 8, no. 534). (The New York Journal of Commerce is strangely numbered. Actually Saturday was the 16th. The date line on the front of the paper is November 14. The date line on page 2 with the editorial masthead is Friday morning, November 15. Apparently the paper was issued on Saturday.)

Luke records the same signs as Matthew, but adds some important statements of what shall take place on earth:

"There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring. Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." Luke 21:25, 26.

Distress of Nations

"Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity." Whether we consider the first world war, or the second, or the years of so-called peace following them, we find "distress of nations with perplexity." Wars may cease, but the problems continue, and even increase. The combined wisdom of great men did not prevent war; and our best minds are disturbed and distressed over the problems of peace.

We are wont to apply to war the statement that men's hearts are failing them for fear, but it applies no less to peace. Some problems seem unsolvable, and how a peace can be established that will satisfy all nations and not contain the seeds of another war is enough to bring perplexity and distress to the leaders as they contemplate the consequences if peace should fail. The world has not yet come to the place where nations will unselfishly consider the interest of their neighbors as well as their own. All are too much engrossed in their own desires, and a final, equitable distribution of the world's resources is no 'easy, perhaps an impossible, task. And yet without this, lasting peace will be a dream. Surely, "men's hearts fare] failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth."

“The sea and the waves roaring; ... the powers of heaven shall be shaken.” Luke 21:25, 26. Sea and waves may here denote nations and peoples as is usual in prophecy; but more likely they have also a literal application and signify convulsions of nature such as are mentioned in verse eleven, when “great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilence. And fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.”

The signs in the sun, moon, and stars, which we have here discussed, together with distress of nations and perplexity, we believe to be the fulfillment of the Savior's words. They came at the time appointed and were of a nature to constitute signs, and taken in connection with the sign of the preaching of the gospel and the other sign of the increase of knowledge, they are a triple confirmation that we are nearing the end of all things.

The next sign mentioned is “the sign of the Son of man.” We are not told what that is, the only thing said being that “then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven.” From the statement in the same verse that then “they shall see the Son of man coming” some have drawn the conclusion that the “sign of the Son of man” is His actual coming “in the clouds of heaven” accompanied by the angels. In this case the cloud of angels would be the visible sign. Though there is no Biblical confirmation that the angels accompanying Jesus constitute the sign of the Son of man, I see no objection to this view. Whatever the sign is, it occurs in immediate connection with the coming of the Lord.

18. The Actual Coming

A Parable

NOW learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh: so likewise you, when you shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour know no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.” Matthew 24:32-36.

The chief lesson of this parable is contained in verse 33: “When you shall see all these things, know.” “All these things” are the things Christ has spoken of and which we have considered. They include the signs in the sun, moon, and stars, the preaching of the gospel, and the increase of knowledge.

“When you shall see all these things.” We have seen all these things; we are now seeing them. The only sign we have not seen, is the “sign of the Son of man in heaven.” When we see all these things we are to know. The statement is not merely permissive. It is imperative, know. Know what? “Know that it is near, even at the doors.” On the basis of this statement we feel safe in saying that “it is near,” or, as the margin has it, “He is near.”

This Generation

Generation is defined as “race, kind, family, stock, breed.” According to this definition the statement would mean that the Jewish race should not perish until Christ comes. So some interpret the statement. To us this does not seem satisfactory. For Christ to tell the disciples that the Jewish race should not die out until He should come, appears meaningless as well as irrelevant.

If Christ was speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, the answer is clear. Those to whom He spoke would in the natural course of events live until the destruction of the city, which took place in the year 70 AD. “This generation,” that is, the people then living “shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.” And the destruction came within forty years. This explanation seems both natural and to the point.

It is when we attempt to apply the answer to the end of all things that the difficulty occurs. That it has an application there also, we believe. But we are not clear either when “this generation” begins or when it ends; nor are we told how long a generation is. Under these circumstances may we not believe that Christ purposely omitted giving further light on this, lest some begin to reckon generations and attempt to find out the exact time of the Lord's coming? Perhaps we should leave it just where Christ left it until we have further light.

However, no one can read this section of the prophecy without coming to the conclusion that Christ had two things in mind: first, to tell us that “it is near,” and second, that “that day and hour know no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”

In saying this, Christ is giving counsel to those who do not believe His coming is near, and also to those who presume to know the day and hour of His coming. He wants us to beware of both errors. “Know that it is near,” He says, “but beware of setting any time for My coming. That the Father alone can do.” This counsel we accept. We believe He is near, even at the doors. But of the day and hour we are in ignorance. Our work is to be ready always.

“As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for you know not what hour your Lord does come.” Matthew 24:37-42.

Eating and Drinking

“Eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.” Luke adds these words of warning: “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.” Luke 21:34, 35.

We know little about the days of Noah except what Christ here states and the added information in Genesis “that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Genesis 6:5. However, if the days of Noah were like our times, one may be permitted to draw a parallel from what is now being done; at least in regard to eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage. This also gives point to Luke’s warning of “surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life.”

The word for “surfeiting” here has the idea of a pain caused by drunkenness or debauch, a seizure brought on by excess, a headache. In this definition we cannot fail to see a vivid picture of what goes on today. Men go on a debauch, a “spree,” a drunken carousal, and suffer the consequences. We all dread pestilence, plagues, war and the many lives lost; but drunkenness, surfeiting, and moral evils may be even more deadly. We are today seeing a generation letting down standards which formerly were considered necessary to continued well-being of society—in fact, vital to its very existence. As surely as these days are like the days of Noah, and as surely as drunkenness, debauch, and sin then brought on a flood, so surely destruction is coming upon this generation.

“Eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.” No one will contend that any of these things are sinful in themselves. Yet they are registered as having the disapproval of God, and as constituting a sign of the times. It is not the use of these things, but their abuse and misuse, that is sin.

Marrying and Giving in Marriage

I could give statistics in regard to marriage and divorce and the increase of infidelity, but they all seem to us entirely inadequate. It may be that one marriage in four ends in the divorce court, and that in certain States and districts the proportion is even higher. But that does not tell the story. Rather it gives the impression that if one in four marriages ends in divorce, three out of four marriages are a success, which by no stretch of the imagination approaches the truth. Only a small number of infidelities ever reach the court. By far the larger share of matrimonial disasters are kept out of court because of religious scruples or for financial reasons. It is sad to see homes broken up. And too many homes are kept together by conventionality or fear of public disgrace, when love has fled and only a shell of a home remains.

I do not in any way condone divorce. God forbid. I wish only to call attention to the fact that divorce court records tell but a part of the story, and the roots go deeper and the evil is far more widespread than the public records reveal.

In saying that eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage were prevailing sins before the Flood, as they are now, Jesus was telling us that too many men live only to satisfy the desires of the flesh, and that the particular sins mentioned are merely symptomatic of a general low conception of life, its duties and responsibilities. And how true that is—true of the world in general and altogether too true of the church.

Spiritual Worship

There is no more enlightening story in the Bible of Jesus’ approach to social questions than that found in the fourth chapter of John, where the story of Jesus’ conversation with the woman at Jacob’s well is recorded. From a purely psychological angle the account will amply repay study. The woman is sparring with Christ rather skillfully, but at last loses out, and wins in the losing. But I wish only to call attention to Jesus’ statement concerning worship:

“The hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” John 41: 2 3, 24.

“God is a Spirit,” or better, God is Spirit. “They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” It is evidently not easy for God to find such worshipers, “for the Father seeks such to worship him.” It might be expected that the world would not be very spiritual, but with the church it should be different. And yet, it is in the church that God is looking for spiritual worshipers. Is this an implied rebuke to us all? Are some of the vital spiritual qualities lacking in our worship? Have we become engrossed in the things of this life, in eating and drinking, in marrying and giving in marriage, until there is little, too little, difference between the church and the world? This is a serious question for all to consider. And so much the more in view of the fact that God designates this generation as being like Noah’s, living in fleshly lusts, in surfeiting and drunkenness. It is in this age that God looks for spiritual worshipers. Shall He look in vain?

“One shall be taken, and the other left.” Matthew 24:40. The question has been raised as to who is saved—the one that is taken or the one that is left. This seems a technicality, and not very vital. The important thing is that two are doing the same thing; one of them is saved, and the other is not. The difference is not in what they do but in what they are.

This brings us again to the consideration that the coming of the Lord is not merely an event in time, but that it brings to us consequences of salvation or damnation according to the relation we sustain to it. Those who are ready will be saved; the others will be lost. The doctrine of the coming of the Lord is thus not merely a theological doctrine but a matter of salvation.

The Resurrection

In the consideration of the prophecy in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew I purposely omitted verse 31, as I wanted to give it special attention. It concerns the work that the angels do when Christ appears, a work that mightily affects every man living at the time. The verse reads:

“He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Matthew 24:31.

This has reference to the gathering of the saints of God from all times and all places, and must of necessity include the resurrection of the dead. Of this Paul gives a description when he says:

“I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” I Thessalonians 4:13-18. “Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”

That is the resurrection in which “the dead in Christ shall rise first.” This will take place when “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.” Verse 16. Then the saints will rise in what John calls “the first resurrection.” (Revelation 20:5.) “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.” Verse 6. And so the “dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:16), rise to be with Christ in His glorious appearing.

There are others, however, beside the risen saints and the angels, who will have an interest in the coming of the Lord. They are those of God's people who are living on the earth when the Lord comes, and who will not die but will be translated without seeing death, and taken to glory. Of these Paul says, that after the saints have been raised from the dead, 11 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.” I Thessalonians 4:17.

This, then, provides for all the saints of God who have ever lived. The dead, who have died in Jesus, are gathered by the angels from “the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Matthew 24:31. The living saints, without seeing death, are “changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed,” and all together “shall be caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” I Corinthians 15:51,52; 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

What Happens to the Wicked?

This gathering of the saints when Christ comes constitutes the great separation of mankind into two groups: one that will be saved, and one that will be lost; one on His right hand, one on His left. The saints that sleep are raised from their graves at Christ's coming; the living saints are changed, translated; and with the innumerable company of angels all ascend to God. “So shall we ever be with the Lord.”

What happens to the wicked at Christ's coming? As there are two classes of saints when Christ comes—those that are dead and those that are living—so there are also two classes of the wicked: those that are dead and those that are living. What happens to the wicked dead at His coming? Nothing. They will be raised in due time but not when Christ comes. Whereas the righteous saints are raised in the first resurrection and “shall reign with him a thousand years,” “the rest of the dead [the wicked] lived not again until the thousand years were finished.” Revelation 20:5,6. The wicked dead are simply left where they are, and are not disturbed until the end of the thousand years.

What happens to the wicked who are alive on the earth when Christ comes? The righteous living will be changed, translated, and taken to heaven. But another fate awaits the wicked living “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9. Them “the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” 2 Thessalonians 1:8.

The picture is clear as to what happens when the Lord comes. The sleeping saints are raised to life, the living saints are changed, and all meet the Lord in the air, ever to be with Him. The wicked dead are not raised until the end of the thousand years; the wicked living are destroyed with the brightness of His coming. The saints live and reign with Christ a thousand years, after which earth's final scenes take place.

In view of this it can readily be understood that Christ's coming is a most important event vitally affecting living and dead alike. It is at this time that the righteous are taken to heaven and the wicked left on the earth. Although the execution of the judgment will not take place till the end of the millennium, the separation of the righteous and the wicked made at Christ's coming is irrevocable.

The Meaning

What, therefore, is the meaning of the second coming of Christ? It means everything to saints and sinners alike. It is the final line that marks the end of probation for all and settles each man's destiny forever. As death is solemn for the individual and ends, or seals, his hope of salvation, so the coming of the Lord settles the destiny of all. Young and old are crossing the line together, and there is no turning back, no delay. Men may now make light of the doctrine of the coming of the Lord; but not in that day. Then will be fulfilled the Scripture: “The heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains. And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” Revelation 6:14-17.

Dreadful words and a dreadful fate. How much better to be able to look up and say, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” Isaiah 25:9.

19. Christ's Parting Instruction

IN CLOSING His discourse on the signs of His coming and of the end of the world, Christ gave two parables and a description of the final judgment, all recorded in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. These we shall consider briefly.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes; go you out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps., And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go you rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man comes.” Matthew 25:1-13.

This parable is so well known that we need not discuss it in detail. Ten virgins, five wise and five foolish—here representing the church—go out to meet the bridegroom, Christ. While the bridegroom tarries, all the virgins fall asleep. At midnight the cry is made, “Behold, the bridegroom comes.” All the virgins awake, but five of them find that their lamps are all going out.” Verse 8, margin. When they ask the other virgins to give them of their oil, they are told that they have none to spare. While the foolish virgins go to buy oil, the bridegroom comes, and those that had oil in their lamps go in with him. When at last the foolish virgins return they find the door shut, and in response to their knock are told, I know you not.” The lesson the Savior points out in this is, “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man comes.” Matthew 25:13.

This parable is spoken for the sake of the church. It is not the world but “the kingdom of heaven” that is likened to ten virgins. And it is not the church in general but the church living at the time when the bridegroom is about to come—the church of today. Are we to conclude that only half of the church are ready to meet the bridegroom and that half of them will be left outside? It is probably not safe to draw any conclusions as to the exact number, but one cannot escape the conclusion that Christ intends to point out that a large part of the church is not ready to meet Him. And the further lesson should not be neglected: The five foolish virgins were not such as rejected the call to go out to meet the bridegroom. They heeded it; they went out to meet Him: but they did not have enough oil, and perished for lack of it. The Spirit being the oil, the lesson is clear. We need and must have an extra supply of the Spirit, or our lamps may go out.

The Parable of the Talents

“The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and dug in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the Lord of those servants comes, and reckoned with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou delivered unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou delivered unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou has not sown, and gathering where thou has not sowed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth. Lo, there thou has that is your. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not sowed: thou ought therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For 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. And cast you the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Matthew 25:14-30.

This parable is also directed to the church. The man traveling in a far country called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods. The one who had received five talents traded with them and gained another five. The one who had received two talents did the same and gained another two. The one who had received one talent hid it down in the earth, and hence gained nothing.

When the master at last returned, the two who had traded with their talents were accounted faithful, made ruler over “many things” and told to enter into the joy of their Lord. The one who had gained nothing was counted “wicked and slothful”; his talent was taken away from him and given to the one who had ten, and he was cast into outer darkness.

This parable places a responsibility upon each Christian to use and develop the talents given him. He may not bury his talent; he may not hoard it; he must use it. The one who had five talents and gained other five was commended, and so was the man who had two talents and gained other two. There is no difference whatever, either in their commendation or reward. Both had been faithful in “few things”; both were set over “many things”; both were told to enter the joy of their lord. NO difference was made

between them though one had gained five and the other only two talents. It may be presumed that had the last man been faithful in his one talent, he would also have been set over “many things” and told to enter into the joy of his lord.

God does not judge according to the greatness of a man's talents, but according to his faithfulness in their use. The first man had five talents to begin with; the last man, only one. If the last man had gained only one talent, he would have gained 100 per cent—exactly the same percentage as the one who had five to begin with and gained other five. In fact, had the last man gained one, and the first man four, the last would have gained 100 per cent and the first only 80 per cent. God reckons according to what a man has, not according to what another man has. This is eminently fair and just.

This parable tells us that there will be a day of reckoning, and that the Lord expects us to give an account of the use we have made of life and its gifts. It is the use that determines the reward, not the original talents, be they few or many. So the parable really says this: See to it that you use your talents, health, time, means, proficiency in various lines—so that you can give an account of their use to God. He is not satisfied to receive again only that which He gave. He wants His own back “with usury.” Only thus can we stand in the judgment and receive the “Well done.”

This parable is of great practical value as well as of deep theological importance. Some may have more talents than others, but every man has at least one. God wants us to improve whatever talent we have. It will not suffice as an excuse that we do not have as great or as many talents as others. Yet, this is the excuse most commonly made. We point to someone having greater or more talents than we, and think, though we may not say, if I had as great talents as he, I would be very glad to help and do. But I am so far beneath him in ability that I do not count. I pray thee, have me excused.”

It is for such that Christ spoke this parable. He knows that we do not all have equal talents, and He also knows that it is those with only one talent who are likely to hold back. It is to these very ones that He makes His appeal. He is promising them the same reward as those who have more talents, if only they are faithful in their use. The one-talent man will be set over much; he will be told, “Well done”; he will enter into the joy of his Lord, just the same as the others. He will receive the same proportion of reward as if he had five talents.

This, therefore, is a parable for the one-talent man—and that is most of us. Christ is trying to encourage such men. He wants us to know that our reward is sure if we will be faithful. And we must not disappoint Him.

The Judgment

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and you gave me meat. I was thirsty, and you gave me drink. I was a stranger, and you took me in: naked, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you visited me: I was in prison, and you came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and you gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink. I was a stranger, and you took me not in: naked, and you clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and you visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” Matthew 25:31-46.

As men are gathered before the judge, their attitude toward Christ as reflected in the treatment of their fellow men is the standard He applies. “Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me,” is the desideratum.

The use of such a standard must be perplexing to those who count respectability, culture, creed, learning, morality, above that of service, such as Christ depicts to be essential. To give a cup of water, to visit the sick, to clothe the naked, to feed the hungry, that, Christ says, is Christianity. Not a word does He say of ritual, or ornamentation, or apostolic succession, or even of creed. In the judgment as He here describes it, one thing only counts—service. What have you done? is the question; and upon the answer hangs the decision.

I need not here stress the fact that Christ was not careless about doctrine, nor do I mean to convey the idea that He is not pleased to have men worship Him in the beauty of holiness, or that He despises culture and learning. Far from it. Christian worship should be impressive, beautified though simple. Christ is not displeased with spiritual hymns, well ordered prayers, thoughtful sermons, and reverent response. Though mere pomposity and show must be a trial to Him, stately, reverent, spiritual worship is a delight. All that savors of lack of planning, or of disorder or slovenliness is not of God, and though some believe that spiritual worship is inconsistent with order and efficiency, Christ thinks the contrary. The Father seeks such to worship Him as worship Him in spirit and in truth.

But however appropriate these things may seem to us now, Christ wants us to know that when He seeks candidates for heaven, only one thing counts; and that one thing is service. Not service done for reward or with the intent of gaining heaven, but service done unostentatiously with no thought or expectation of recompense.

Note to whom the service is extended: the naked, the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the sick, the prisoner; such as are unable or unlikely ever to repay, and from whom no recompense is expected. It is the unselfish and unheralded service Christ rewards. Of others, that do these things to be seen of men, Christ says, "They have their reward." Matthew 6:2. These who quietly and perhaps even secretly do, their little deeds of mercy, the Father which sees in secret Himself shall reward . . . openly." Verse 4.

With this final picture of the judgment, Christ's Olivet discourse ends. He has answered the questions put to Him by the disciples: 'When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?' Patiently, kindly, exhaustively He has answered them, added parables of warning and admonition, and given them the rule which will be used to measure men in the judgment. Now He has finished the task and is ready for Gethsemane and Golgotha.

Outstanding Points of Warning

As we look back over Christ's important sermon in regard to His return, we find these outstanding points of warning, admonition, information, and counsel.

1.Be sure that no one deceives you in regard to the question of My coming. Many false prophets and christs shall appear and deceive many. Be on your watch.

2.There shall be wars and rumors of wars. Be not disturbed. They shall come, as shall also famines and pestilence and earthquakes. These are the beginning of sorrows, but the end is not yet.

3.Watch for the spread of the gospel. When it has been preached in all the world for a witness to all mankind, then shall the end come. This is an important and sure sign. Watch for it.

4.Attempt to understand what Daniel has written. He speaks of the time of the end, and says that at that time knowledge shall be increased.

5.There shall come a time of great tribulation so great that if those days are not shortened, no flesh will be saved.

6.Immediately after the tribulation has ended the Sun shall be darkened, the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven.

7.Then shall come distress among nations, men shall be failing them for fear and for looking after those things that are to come upon the earth.

8.When we see all these things, then we may know that He is near, even at the doors. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not His word.

9.Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then they shall see Him coming with power and great glory, and all the wicked of the earth shall wail because of Him.

10.At Christ's actual coming the resurrection of the righteous dead shall take place, the living saints shall be translated, and together they shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

11.The wicked who are living on the earth at the time of Christ's appearing shall be destroyed by the brightness of His coming, and the wicked dead shall not be raised until the end of the thousand years.

12.The church should be sure to be awake and have an extra supply of oil, lest their lamps go out at the critical moment.

13.Each man is responsible for the talents entrusted to him. God will require His own back with usury. In doing this, God is not requiring an unreasonable thing. It is according to what a man has that the judgment will be rendered.

14.All that God requires is simple, lowly service-giving a drink of water, visiting the sick and imprisoned, or feeding or clothing the destitute.

These statements of Christ's are sound, reasonable, appropriate. They do not tell us when Christ is coming; they do not give us the day or the hour; but they do tell us that He is near, even at the doors. The whole tenor of Christ's discourse echoes the warning: "Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man comes."

The doctrine of Christ's return seems sensible, simple, and beautiful. It savors in no way of the sensational or bizarre, yet it is the most important message to this generation. Christ has always been, and must always be, central in our religious conception. His coming to this earth as a babe commanded the interest of all heaven, and an angel was sent to the shepherds to announce the birth of the Savior. "Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Luke 2:13,14. At His Second Coming "all the holy angels" will come with Him. Matthew 25:31. It is not known how many angels were at the plains of Bethlehem to announce the first coming. There were doubtless many. But now "all the holy angels" will come. That must mean millions upon millions. It must be a momentous event. It will not be sufficient at that time to say that we are not interested in His coming, that all that concerns us is to do our work and be ready whenever He comes. The bride of Christ will not be indifferent to the news of the coming of the Lord. Rather, "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 righteousness of saints. And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said unto me, These are the true sayings of God." Revelation 19:7-9.

It is distressing to hear men speaking lightly or irreverently of the Lord and His coming. It is saddening to hear of men setting time for the Lord to come, and thus bringing the whole subject of the coming of the Lord into disrepute. It is perplexing to hear Christians speak disparagingly of the subject of the Second Coming or show lack of interest in it. Think of the leaders in Israel who missed the greatest event of the ages because they were not watching for or interested in prophecy, and did not know that the time had

come for the appearing of their Lord. They failed in not knowing “this time,” in not discerning the signs of the times, and they never recovered their lost ground.

Satan is setting the stage for a like failure. At this time when men ought to be interested in the Second Coming, they are making more of the first coming than ever before. Christmas is held in higher esteem than ever, and the Christ child is adored as never before. This is well, but could it be that Satan is pleased to have men now stress Christmas and the first coming simply because it takes their minds away from the second coming? God forbid that we should not be interested even at this time in the Jesus child. But one cannot escape the conclusion that this is occupying the Christian's attention to the detriment of the message of the soon return of our Lord. Christ can truly say: 'When I came as a child, but very few were interested in My coming. Now when I am about to come the second time as King of kings and Lord of lords, they are all interested in My first coming. How strange men are! Why do they not discern this time?’

Christ must be grieved to have so many Christians ignore all the warnings He has sent and all the signs He has given. Nineteen centuries ago the church was asleep, ignorant of His birth, and unacquainted with the prophecies. Now, as another important event is at the door, the church is engrossed with the first coming and practically ignores the second. Christ can do no more than He has done. The signs we have been studying are so plain and evident that there can be little excuse for any. We can only pray that the church will yet awake to its great privilege and not fulfill the part of the five foolish virgins in the parable. There is yet time, but there is none to lose. May God grant the church power to rise, shed its lethargy and drowsiness, and go forth to meet the bridegroom.

20. Marriage And Divorce

IT WAS God who in the Garden of Eden, after He had made man, said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” Genesis 2:18. Thus marriage was instituted and family life begun. This relationship was God's thought of ideal human existence, and on it He planned to build a race of creatures who would be happy in their love and cheerful in their obedience to Him. As God is love, so He wanted His creatures to be and to live in love, for “he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him.” I John 4:16.

Marriage, as the basis of family life and of the race, is God ordained and is the Edenic plan for the physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual well being of man. Through it man was to learn lessons that could not be learned so well any other way, and through it he was to grow up to the full stature of manhood in Christ Jesus. God conceived marriage as furnishing the best possible conditions for the full development of that character which is necessary to the complete enjoyment of life and appreciation of the love of God-

In these days when marriage to many has lost its sacred character, it is well to consider God's original plan and wherein man has departed from it to his own detriment. Even among Christians there are too many marriage failures, and as in the case of other divine precepts, that which God designed to be a blessing, man has perverted and turned into a curse.

Two Institutions

Two institutions have come down to us from the Garden of Eden: the Sabbath of the Lord and marriage. Both are sacred; both are honorable; both were made for man. In fulfilling the sacred obligations of each, man may attain to the highest spiritual communion and the deepest understanding of the Godhead. They are among the choicest gifts of God.

“It is not good that the man should be alone.” These words were true when they were spoken, and they are true now. They hold good for the woman as well as for the man, for the word man here is used generically, and includes both sexes. It is not good for people to be alone. This is a universal truth based on God's Word and the experience of mankind. Man needs companionship, love, and understanding. He was not intended to be a solitary being. When God created man He made two beings: “male and female created he them.” These two are to be one, each helping and complementing the other, and together forming a complete unit. Alone, they abide alone. United they constitute the basis of continued life expanding into the family circle, where life finds its truest and sweetest exercise and where the love of God comes to full human fruition.

If the aim of life is the perfecting of a character which will meet the approval of God and fit its possessor for the life that is to come, we can but suppose that God from the very beginning would so condition life that it should minister to 'the attainment of the goal sought. We must therefore believe that when God instituted marriage He did not put a stumbling block in the way of men to the attainment of perfection, but that, rightly understood and entered into, it would prove a boon and a blessing. Eve was to be “a help meet for” Adam. So, in the plan of God, is every wife to be to her husband, and we must not confine this to merely temporal matters. God doubtless intended it to include all phases of life.

We shall not here enter into a discussion of the influence for good or ill that one sex has over the other. Each has characteristics that the other needs, and if the influence is along right lines, the other is powerfully affected for good. If the influence is toward evil, the effect is just as great. In the plan of God each is to be a help to the other, sharing perplexities and problems, and rejoicing together over victories gained. As the old marriage hymn has it: “In all our happiness, joys will be doubled, And each one bear only half of the sorrows.”

Love as a Motive Power

Love is the strongest motive power of which man knows. It has altered the course of history, overturned empires, and elevated man, and through its perversion it has degraded man. Rightly directed in the service of humanity, it has produced men like Paul, Judson, Livingstone, and the host of men and women who have given their lives in unselfish service. Misdirected to the glorification of self

and love of power, it has produced Nero, Voltaire, Napoleon, and the host of men and women who have been willing to barter their hope of eternal life for a short period of the applause of men and the gratification of selfish and unlawful desires. This mighty power God wishes to use in the development of right and noble traits of character. To help in this, He has instituted the marriage relation, which gives opportunity for acquiring, under the most favorable conditions, such Christian virtues as forbearance, sympathy, unselfishness, and many other virtues which every Christian should possess.

As one of the greatest sins is selfishness or covetousness, so one of the hardest lessons to learn is unselfishness. Ever since the entrance of sin there has been an intense desire on the part of man to get and to hold all that he can. This tendency begins in early childhood, and unless curbed, will increase rather than diminish as the years go by. Only by continued watchfulness can selfishness be overcome and the idea of sharing take root. Who has not seen an only child exhibit most unlovely traits when playing with other children, and fly into a rage when asked to share with them. In this respect children are as bad as their elders, and the example set before them does not strengthen their altruism. What can be done to teach men and women the beauty of unselfishness, and cause them to see that the idea of sharing is the way of life and that there is no other way?

Lessons to Be Learned

Long before the evil one implanted in the hearts of men the seeds of selfishness, covetousness, and hatred, God planted the seed of love. Eve was indeed a help meet for Adam, one that answered to him, or, as the phrase might be translated, one to match him. He found in her the answer to his quest for happiness, and as they walked hand in hand to view their home and the many things God had prepared for them, love for each other and for God filled their hearts. In their love they harbored no thoughts of evil or of selfishness. It was the desire and delight of each to please and help the other.

Love is the antidote for selfishness and covetousness. It is the nature of love to give. When love ceases to give, it ceases to be love. Its greatest delight is in doing something for others. It willingly sacrifices and deprives itself that others may have. It suffers long and is kind. It withholds nothing that is for the good of the loved one. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. It never fails. (1 Corinthians 13:7, 8.)

A home founded on love is the best place on earth to learn unselfishness. It is not a hardship to share with one you love. Nothing is easier or more pleasant. The young man hastens with some little gift to bring to his beloved. The mother gladly deprives herself for the good of her little one. The husband toils and works hard that those dependent on him may have what they need. Love finds or makes a way to secure the happiness of the object of its affection, and is not satisfied unless it can accomplish this.

Love is implanted in the human heart by God. Through it He would remake the world ruined by sin. Love is the only power capable of performing this miracle; but love can do it. Love has done it. It is remaking thousands of lives today that will form the nucleus of a new world order to be ushered in with the coming of the Son of man. Calvary gave a demonstration of the strength of that love in the heart of God, and the culmination will be reached when the saints become partakers of the divine nature and are "filled with all the fullness of God." Ephesians 3:19.

There may be, there are, biological reasons for falling in love. But need we believe that this is the only reason why God permits men to pass through the experience of love? Does not love serve other purposes? Does it not take the selfish, covetous, self-centered man out of himself, give him new interests and ambitions, and make a new man out of him? He has never before given, or sacrificed, or been at pains to please anyone. Now he is changed; now he gives; he even sacrifices. Something has happened to him. A new power controls him. No power but love could make such a transformation and the transformation is as permanent as his love. When one ceases the other ceases.

Love serves a definite spiritual purpose. It tends to nullify selfishness, egotism, and self centeredness. It furnishes new objectives and gives zest to life. It is in itself the supreme illustration of its power to change men, and is prophetic of the still greater power that may possess men when a love greater than human love shall control. If love for a human being can work miracles, what may not be accomplished when the soul selects as its object of affection the only Being who can satisfy the deepest longing of the soul? Eternity alone can measure such results.

Human love beautifies, ennobles, transforms, elevates, to the extent to which it is placed on a worthy object. When it is directed toward the low and the ignoble it degrades, deforms, and ruins.

When God established the marriage relation He created the most favorable environment for man to be drawn away from love of himself to love for others. Had God created Adam only, there would have been no one else to whom Adam could be drawn and on whom he could lavish his affection. God Himself observed that among the beasts of the field there was none that would be a satisfying companion to Adam. They were below him and could not satisfy the craving for love and companionship that was implanted in him. By parity of reasoning we may suppose that angels were not chosen as companions, as they are a different order of beings. God therefore made a help meet for him, one that answered to him, one that matched him. With this, creation was complete and man was in the best possible position for developing according to God's plan for him.

Love as a Character Builder

Before the creation of Eve, Adam could roam the fields and enjoy what God had made for him. There was none of his own kind, however, with whom he could talk matters over, none to share his joys. Whereas being alone would in some respects be ideal, it would not help him to develop such desirable traits as courtesy, respect for the rights of others, sympathy, consideration, deference, and above all, unselfishness. These can be developed only in close intimate relation. And so God made Adam a help meet for him.

As stated, without Eve, Adam had only himself to consider. With her creation, life took on a different aspect. He could not come and go as he pleased without taking anyone else into consideration. There were obligations resting upon him; there was someone whose expectations he must meet. As Eve would not care to go or to be alone any more than Adam, there must be planning and agreement as to where to go and what to do. Many of Adam's plans must be gauged to Eve's strength and convenience, and her desires must have equal weight with his own. In fact, each found that there must be a continual deference to the will and desire of the other, and the valuable lesson of learning to adjust oneself to others was being learned by both.

This, however, could never have become burdensome to these first two human beings. They loved each other, and it was their delight to plan and work together. True love adjusts itself to the desires of the other, and the only pardonable disagreement would be that of who should have the privilege of giving in, each coveting this desirable experience for himself. With the arrival of Eve schooling in life's duties and privileges began in earnest, and character building took on new aspects.

To the critical reader it may be remarked that as Eve was created the same day as Adam, the observation of what Adam might have done without Eve is only made by way of emphasis and to bring out the lesson more clearly.

A Third Person

But even with the creation of Eve, Adam's education was not complete. They could be, and were, happy in their love to each other. Yet all their love for their own kind must be expended on themselves. One more link must be added to the chain. There must be someone who could command their mutual love, some third person who would enlarge their conception of love and on whom they could unite in a common love, lest, as mentioned before, all their love be expended on themselves. This third factor was provided in the birth of their first child. In him the consummation of their love, their union, was made complete. Now they could plan, not for themselves but for others. Thus all their experiences were made to minister to the one great object God had in view: the perfection of a character that would meet His approval and fit them for a life of larger usefulness and service.

When men place marriage on a physical basis only, they misinterpret the original intent of God. It is His plan that marriage shall furnish the best possible conditions for the acquisition of the attributes of God, and prepare men to become members of the family above. It is His intent that each home shall be a place of love, peace, and purity, where tempted man may be sure of understanding and of sympathy. A shelter to which he may flee from the turmoil of the world, and where there are those that trust and believe in him. With such assurance he can go forth courageously to fight the battles of life, knowing that there are those who understand and care. Such a man is well nigh invincible.

In God's design marriage is intended as an aid to the development of those Christian virtues which it is necessary for him to have before he is admitted to the celestial courts above. Although these virtues might possibly be developed otherwise, God Himself chose the home as the ideal place. For this reason its sanctity should be sacredly guarded, and anything that tends to lower its efficiency or destroy its usefulness is a blow aimed not only at the home but at religion.

It is therefore easy to understand why Satan should wish to do all in his power to destroy the sanctity of marriage. It is God-ordained. It is a reminder of Eden. It is founded on love. It is the bulwark of religion. It is the place where true character building has its citadel. It is a foretaste of the Eden to come, a small heaven in which to go to heaven. For these reasons Satan hates it, and his settled purpose is to destroy it.

Marriage a School

Every institution that God has approved has as its chief objective the development of character. Marriage is no exception to this general rule. It is designed to teach men certain lessons which all need as candidates for eternity.

Here is where much of the difficulty lies, for many are unwilling to learn and some seem incapable of learning. They are like students who attend college for the social advantages it gives, but are totally uninterested in the educational features. To them college would be a delightful place were it not for the teachers who insist on students' getting their lessons.

Some do not like to think of marriage or the home as educational institutions; yet in God's plan they are largely so. There the husband may learn lessons of tenderness, sympathy, and consideration. There he may learn to bear responsibility, to take the initiative, to get under the load. There he may learn the wonderful lesson of having to "give in," of learning to back down gracefully (or otherwise), of finding out that superior bodily strength is no sure criterion of mental superiority. There he may learn to cooperate, to work in double harness, to modify his opinions in the light of experience. There he may learn the workings of a mind of the opposite sex—often puzzling and perplexing to him—and find to his astonishment that it is more often correct than his own logical one, and that if he is wise, he will trust more to the counsel received at home than to the sage opinion of his neighbors. In retrospect he will be thankful for the times when he was saved from making a fool of himself by heeding the advice of his wife, and he will sadly remember how many more times he could have been saved had he been willing to listen to her counsel. He will on his knees thank the God of heaven for teaching him valuable lessons, and will know that if he is ever saved in the kingdom of heaven, much of the credit will go to the one whom he has promised to love, honor, and cherish.

The wife has an equal number of lessons to learn. She needs many of the same lessons which the husband does, and she has the same opportunity for learning them. She learns as one of the first lessons that life is real, that there is hard work to be done, and that she will not be exempt. This some girls need to learn. They have been flattered, petted, and spoiled. To them life is a bed of roses; they have been without responsibility and have never had to shoulder burdens. Now life begins in earnest, and they must learn to adjust themselves. And this is not always easy. There are meals to be prepared; there is washing to be done; there are household tasks without end. Work, work, work, is the order of the day, and there is little time for rest or recreation. And after a hard day's work, when

she is at the point of exhaustion, she must appear sweet, calm, and composed as she meets her husband returning from his work. Whoever thinks that a wife's work is easy needs to revise his estimate.

Few are the men successful in public life who do not have a faithful wife to thank for their success. Many are the wives who not only have children to rear but who in addition have a husband who needs bringing up. Many a wife early learns that the husband's idea of the division of work is that he is to take most of the glory and she is to do most of the work. But even this lesson is worth learning. There are altogether too many people who are willing to work only if they can be duly recognized and receive public credit. Few are those who are willing to toil in obscurity, receiving only the credit that the angel records. But to be willing to do this is real religion. In the books of heaven, could some husbands read the writing, they would be astonished to see how God keeps books. It would make them a little more humble, and also more appreciative of the unselfish work of their companions.

The home is the choicest school of heaven. Here lessons are learned that count for eternity; here hearts are prepared for receiving the fullness of God which results from a deeper appreciation of the love of God. Here lives are united in love as an earnest of the union of the soul to God; here men are privileged to taste a little of the love of Him who so loved that He gave His only begotten Son, and to understand that love better.

Some of the lessons we have here mentioned are not easy to learn. But husbands need them, and wives need them. And what better teacher could be provided than the home provides? If there is love, it is not hard to be considerate. If there is love, it is not hard to let the loved one have the credit. If there is love, it is not hard to sacrifice or to give in. True love will bear, suffer, and keep sweet. If these are lessons that must be learned, we could have no better teacher than the one we ourselves have selected as life partner. This is God's own order.

What About Divorce?

Some married couples act like spoiled children. One year they promise before the minister to love and cherish each other till death shall them part; the next year they appear before the judge to have the marriage dissolved, often for the most trivial reasons. They are not willing to learn life's lessons; they are not willing to adjust themselves. They are like children who have formed a dislike for the teacher and want to quit school. They have not learned discipline; they have not learned to endure hardness; they are attempting to shun life's realities. And so they simply decide to leave their companion and get a divorce, thinking that thus they will escape their difficulties. But in most cases they are disappointed. They only succeed in entangling themselves in new difficulties that will be a source of lifelong regret. Divorce is in itself a defeatist measure that should be avoided.

God, who in the beginning instituted marriage, looks with concern upon the low estimate in which it is now held by many, even by professed Christians. It might be supposed that the mere worldling would look with disdain upon marriage as an ordinance of God and attempt to invent substitutes, but we would not expect a follower of God to join the worldling in this. Yet in the matter of the number of divorces granted there is little difference between those who profess religion and those who do not. All alike appear before the courts to have their marriages dissolved, and are ready to contract new alliances without compunction of conscience.

The situation in the days of Jesus was not much different from what it is today. Men married and were given in marriage. Men divorced their wives, with or without cause, and remarried at the first opportunity. Divorce was easy, and much injustice prevailed. Men had departed from God's plan. There was need of renewed emphasis on the sacredness of the marriage bond and its binding character on the contracting parties. This Christ furnished.

Christ Honors Marriage

The first miracle Jesus performed was at a marriage feast in Cana in Galilee. To this feast Jesus had been invited with His disciples, and He had accepted the invitation. The wine supply unfortunately gave out, and Jesus was asked by His mother to supply the need. There were six large empty water pots, and Jesus commanded that they be filled with water. After this was done He said unto the servants: "Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and said unto him, Every man at the beginning does set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou has kept the good wine until now." John 2:8-10.

Jesus need not have accepted the invitation to this marriage had He not wanted to. If He felt that as a matter of courtesy He must accept it, He could have made His stay very brief and departed at the first opportunity. He could have refused to help out with the wine supply. But He did none of these things. He honored marriage by His presence and by the performance of His first miracle.

A Question About Divorce

Several times in His ministry Jesus came in contact with questions concerning divorce. One time "the Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have you not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He said unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and who marries her which is put away does commit adultery." Matthew 19:39.

This record contains several interesting statements. First of all it settles one question of divorce and remarriage. The question which the Pharisees asked was whether it was “lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause.” Verse 3. To this Jesus answered without hesitation, ‘Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and who marries her which is put away does commit adultery.’ Verse 9.

This pronouncement must have made a deep impression upon the minds of the apostles, as is evidenced by their conclusion: “If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.” Verse 10. They had apparently not before had the view of the binding obligation of marriage which Jesus presented to them. With the rest of the Jews they believed that a man could marry a woman, and if the marriage was not entirely satisfactory, get a divorce. But if marriage was as binding as Jesus stated, if they could not marry and divorce as they pleased, they decided that perhaps they better not marry. The conclusion we draw from this is that Jesus intended to give men such a view of the sacredness of marriage as would make them think seriously before they entered into an alliance that could not easily be broken.

If what Jesus here states is the true Christian view of marriage and divorce, then both the church and the world have wandered far away from God's ideal. All trial marriages, compassionate marriages, and temporary alliances are forbidden, with most of the divorces. While Moses because of the hardness of their hearts had permitted some things, “from the beginning it was not so.” With Jesus this argument was final. If from the beginning it was not so, if an ordinance had been added later and was contrary to God's original plan, it was not binding. As it was in the beginning, as God Himself had ordained it, thus it should be. Jesus had come to restore that which had been perverted and give back to man the original. This included the marriage institution.

‘What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.’ This statement is based on the fact that “he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” Verses 4-6. Paul, quoting the statement, “They two shall be one flesh,” makes the observation that this is a great mystery, making it symbolic of the union of Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:31, 32.)

Causes for Failure

Why is it that so many make shipwrecks of their matrimonial ventures? Why do so many fail in this most important phase of life? When we consider the thousands of homes that are broken up every year, and the tens of thousands of children thus left without adequate home environment, the divorce situation approaches the dimensions of a national tragedy. If to these thousands of homes are added other thousands where the home remains intact only for religious or financial reasons, but where love long since has fled, we are face to face with a situation which vitally affects the very life blood of the nation. No nation can long survive in which the home—the strength of any people—is in decay. For political, if not for religious reasons, such a state of affairs is fraught with great danger.

All this raises the question of the reasons for the failure of the home. Let us consider some of these reasons, not necessarily in the order of their importance or logical consequence. It is doubtful that there is such an order or logical sequence. So many human factors enter into the equation that what appears important to one may not appear so to another.

Religion

One cause for many failures in married life is a lack of good, old-fashioned religion. Our forefathers may not have been all that they should be, but there was a certain solidity about them, a decent respect for one's word, a reverence for religion and sacred things, that is not in evidence today. They taught their children to respect authority, and the rod was not spared. True, mistakes were doubtless made, but if one were to judge by the results of their methods as compared to more modern ones, I am convinced that they would gain by the comparison. The old saying that children should be seen and not heard has been laughed at by modern psychologists. And I am inclined to agree with them. Nevertheless, after numerous exhibitions of modern children who immediately take the stage upon the arrival of company, and “show off,” to the great delight of the parents and the disgust of the “company.” I sometimes think it would be refreshing to see a child reared in the old-fashioned way.

Old-fashioned religion had a sense of authority about it that is conspicuously lacking in the new order of things. Men spoke because they believed, and the same sense of authority carried into the home. There was a deep and abiding respect for the word of father and mother, and transgression of their commands was not lightly considered. Children were brought up to believe that there was a wrong and a right side to most things, and that it mattered much which side they took. Growing up into manhood and womanhood they retained their respect for those in authority, and when God spoke, when His words were quoted, there was an end to debate. A foundation was laid in the home that stood the children in good stead all the days of their lives. They had a sense of obedience, of reverence, of respect for authority which made them good Christians and good citizens.

Family Worship

The old-fashioned religion demanded the reading of the Bible daily. The father was the priest of the household, and morning and evening the family gathered together for worship. These seasons were ordinarily rather long for the children, but no disrespect or inattention was permitted, though the very little ones were granted the privilege of quietly falling asleep leaning on mother or perhaps being taken into her lap. Although it was tiresome to the children, and it may be doubted that for some years they received much benefit from the long and monotonous reading of the Word, they did absorb something, not the least of which was a familiarity with

Biblical expressions and phraseology, the absence of which knowledge is a definite loss to the present generation. The cultural loss to society because of the decay of family worship is not easily estimated. Family prayers are not to be recommended on cultural grounds, yet even from this angle the loss from the omission of family worship is considerable.

If the little ones did not get much spiritual help or consolation from the morning and evening worship hour, they did learn some things that were invaluable to them in later years: they learned reverence for religion and for the Word, and they learned that at certain times they must be still. And still they were. There were times when they would have given almost anything to be released, but there was no release.

Home Discipline

This kind of discipline is most valuable. For a man to follow the dictates of his feelings; for him to do what he likes and shun that which is unpleasant, brings no reward worth having. To follow the line of least resistance does not make for sturdy manhood. It is the man who faces his problems full face, who keeps under the body that he may excel, who wins out in the end. It is the man who does not run away from a hard task but courageously tackles it, who accepts the challenge of doing what no man has done before, who wins the crown. Such men do not just happen. They have gone through hard discipline. They have not spared themselves. They have learned to endure hardship and not to give up because there are obstacles. They have gone through many a dark hour, they have had to grit their teeth and say, "I will not give up," and in the end they have won out. Such men are worth while.

Some of these lessons are hard to learn after a person grows older. The boy who was not permitted to shirk a task because he thought it hard. The boy who was asked to finish his work before he could play; the boy who early learned that the reason for doing or not doing a certain task was not whether he liked or disliked it, but the fact that it had to be done, had ingrained in his nature something that is beyond price. Such boys have an immeasurable advantage over those who have not been so disciplined. These latter must do for themselves what their parents should have done, but what is nearly impossible to accomplish in later life. Yet it must be done if there is to be any success.

Some may ask what this has to do with marriage. Much in every way. Compare a young man who has been brought up in a home where there is respect for the Bible, respect for work, respect for authority, respect for contracts, with one brought up in a home where these are not found. The first young man early learns that he cannot have his own way, that there is hard work that must be done whether he likes it or not. He learns not to give up because things do not come easy, and he acquires a certain flair for making a success of that upon which he embarks. Can there be any question as to who is most likely to make a success of marriage?

All must admit that early training has much to do with later success. This is true of marriage as of other things. The child who has not known discipline, the child who has not learned self-control, the child who has not learned to work, the child who has not learned reverence and respect for authority, the child who has not learned to pray, the child who has not learned to confess his sins and to ask forgiveness, will make a difficult husband or wife. And few modern young people have learned these things. I believe, therefore, that I am stating a truth when I say that the lack of old-fashioned religion has much to do with failure in married life.

The Sex Question

The matter of sex has much to do with marital happiness and unhappiness. Of late years sex has become a topic of common conversation, and that which was formerly spoken of only in privacy or in consultation with the family doctor is now proclaimed from the housetops. This new freedom is not the unmixed blessing that its advocates affirm. That there may be good in a full and free discussion of all that pertains to life is not denied. However, much that goes under the name of sex information and claims scientific backing is merely sex filth whose undoubted result is an inflaming of passions and a breaking over of the moral code. We need to pray God to preserve us from such. Let matters freely be discussed under right conditions, but there is no place for the self-appointed guardians of the new morality-or rather immorality. Much of their teaching would shame the beasts of the field.

God who instituted the marriage relation honors His own institution. It is still true that it is not good for man to be alone, but it is also true that much which God intended to be a blessing, man has turned into a curse. In the marriage relation, more than in any other, love, consideration, and kindness are needed. As this book is not a medical work I shall not attempt to give advice that should come through competent and consecrated physicians. Let such be sought wherever needed. But let all have in mind that Christianity deals with, and reaches into, all conditions of life, and that no man who is inconsiderate, selfish, and even brutal can have the approval of God or the respect of his wife. Mutual forbearance and love can make the sharing of life's experiences a heaven. Lack of them may make marriage a hell. Most people have their fate in their own hands, and can make of life what they please. Let all, under God, make of marriage what God would have it be-a little heaven.

Home Finances

It is not always great things that ruin marriage. Small things can at times be very annoying. And sometimes a little foresight and kindly consideration will forestall what might become a calamity.

It is very annoying, not to say humiliating, for a wife to have to ask for every penny she needs. In her own heart she feels that she is doing her share of the work and that she has a right to part of the money that comes in. She may not earn real cash, but she is doing a work for which cash would have to be paid out if she did not do her work. We believe this point is well taken and that she should not be compelled to ask for that which is hers by right. Many are the wives who feel the humiliation of asking for money to such a degree that they will do without as long as possible rather than ask the husband for that which he should freely provide.

This may not seem a very great matter, and to many it may not be. But to others it is. On the money rock many an otherwise happy marriage has been wrecked. However, the fault is not always and entirely the husband's. Many a man would do better if he only

knew better or had been taught better. Marriage is new to him. It may never occur to him that there is a better way of handling the money problem than what he is doing. Whenever the wife asks for money she gets it. What more can she want? He does not understand that there are a dozen little things that the wife needs, and for which she needs money but dislikes asking. He does not understand that she ought to have a little money of her very own, for which she does not have to give an account, money which is hers, not handed out because she asks for it.

No, the husband may not always understand this, and the wife perhaps does not tell him. She thinks that he ought to know; and we agree. But some men do not know and it is for the wife to teach her husband. She hesitates, but if she only knew how anxious he is to learn, she would not delay. He is probably as anxious as she is to do right.

True there are husbands who do not care to learn, and also there are wives who do not use wisely the money entrusted to them. However, the husband may not always be the financial genius of the family. Many are the men who could profit greatly by making their wives partners in their financial ventures. This, however, is not my burden. What I am pleading for is that the wife be not unnecessarily humiliated by having to ask for that which is rightfully hers. It would be well for some husbands to have to ask their wives for money. It would be a great help to them.

In olden times there were special agreements made as to dowry when a wedding took place, and this custom still prevails in certain countries. I would not advocate any such arrangement, but would it not be well if the matter of finance was talked over before marriage, and some agreement arrived at that would ensure the wife a part of the family income? It would avoid much difficulty later on and save much humiliation on the part of the wife. Such an arrangement is much easier made before than after marriage.

Differences of Religious Belief

A frequent cause of disharmony in the home is difference of religious belief. This may not seem a very important matter when neither party before marriage has enough religion to cause concern. But even though this be so, it should be remembered that marriage has a way of sobering people, and that the young man and woman who were careless before marriage may become much sobered as life's realities face them. It is often the case, as the young wife goes down into the valley to bring forth a new life, that religion suddenly looms before her as the only thing worth while, and she decides to dedicate not only herself but her little one to God.

The husband finds himself facing a new situation with which he does not know how to deal. Before they were only two, now they are three; and the husband often does not get the attention he formerly received. In early married life they went to shows and dances together, but now with the little one they can do so no more. It seems to the husband that there are times when they could go; but the wife has lost her zest for such things, and she uses the little one as an excuse. He fears that she has "got religion," and that this is the real reason for her not wishing to go. Though she cannot go to dances any more, she seems perfectly able to attend religious meetings, and is quite, enthusiastic about them-so much so that she wants him to go also.

And so the stage is set for tragedy. The husband has not foreseen such a contingency and is puzzled as to what to do. He feels that a wedge is being driven between him and his wife, that their interests are diverging, and that they are drifting farther and farther apart. And this has largely come about because of religion. The wife is interested in things he does not care for. She is enthusiastic about the sermons she hears, she thinks the preacher is a wonderful man, and the husband is not sure but that she thinks as much of the preacher as she does of him. What is he to do? What can he do?

Under such conditions much wisdom and patience is needed on the part of both. No one can foresee the future, and it is not possible to provide for all contingencies. It is, however, flying in the face of fate for two to unite in matrimony who are of different religious beliefs, or when one is a Christian and the other is not. Such is almost sure to bring difficulty and perhaps disaster sooner or later. If religion is to be of any value, it must play a large part in the life of the individual. There are so many things that a Christian cannot do with a good conscience that the non-Christian permits himself to indulge in freely. If, therefore, one is religious and the other is not, it is bound to bring about a crisis, sometimes with unfortunate results.

I do not recommend the union of a believer with an unbeliever. Experience has proved that such a combination is fraught with potential disaster. It is most unsatisfactory to the nonbeliever, and it is a cause of continual sorrow and regret to the believer. In such a home the shadows are never lifted.

An Experience

Years ago a young minister had an experience that left a deep impression upon his mind. He was pastor of a church in a large city and had hundreds of souls under his care. In the congregation was a young woman, estimable in every way, who was very much in love with a young man, not a Christian. She hesitated a long time before giving her consent to marriage, but at last did so, relying upon promises made by her fiancée. She was very much in love with the young man, and he apparently returned her affections, and love would find a way to win him to Christianity. She suddenly disappeared from the church, and it was rumored that she had married the young man, but no one knew anything definite.

Nearly two years later the pastor happened to meet the young woman as he was making pastoral calls one Sunday. To his astonishment, and to hers, they met as she opened the door in response to a knock. She had changed much in those two years, and the pastor immediately saw that all was not well. He was invited into a room that was almost bare of furniture, and was asked to be seated. It was evident that there was a restraint of some kind, and the pastor was perplexed to know how to open the conversation. Being acquainted with her from childhood, however, he decided to plunge right into the subject that was nearest his heart. How was she getting along in her married life, and what about her spiritual progress? With some hesitation she told her story-not a very pleasant one.

She had absented herself from worship because she knew that her marriage was not approved by the church. For a while all had gone well, and she was confident that the fears which had been expressed that her marriage with a nonbeliever would not prove successful were unfounded. She intended to keep her religion and did not accompany her husband to some of the festivities which he attended. But he got into bad company, and began drinking in a small way. She remonstrated with him and decided that she had better accompany him when he went out. This, however, did not prove successful. She did not feel at home with his friends, and as she did not take part in the hilarity that went on, it was a relief to both of them when she decided to go no more. His drinking took on a more serious aspect, and at times he would come home drunk. This called for great diplomacy on her part, for he was not above abusing her on such occasions. She had had no experience in handling drunken men, and at times she greatly feared that he would become violent.

Then came the baby. She went through the ordeal alone, her husband appearing at the hospital only once and leaving immediately when he found out that it was a girl. Up until then he had supported the home, but after the baby came he spent but little time with the family. It became necessary for her to find work so that she and the baby might have the necessary food. This was not easy to do with the little one, but kind neighbors helped in taking care of the baby. She thought of going to the pastor with her troubles, but shame held her back. So she continued to live in the same place where her husband stayed—it could not be called home.

Then one morning about a month before the pastor called an accident had happened to her. As she was kindling the fire to make a little heat—it was winter—her nightdress caught fire and she was burned about the shoulders. The burns, though not deep, were very painful. She could not stop working, however, for she and the baby must have food, so she had gone to work in that condition, every movement causing excruciating pain. For nearly four weeks she had gone out washing while the burns slowly healed, her husband in the meantime blissfully ignorant of conditions. "Where is your husband now?" she was asked.

She went to a door which opened into another room, and pointed to a heap on the floor. Her husband had come home that morning, dead drunk, and now he was lying on the floor in his own filth, a spectacle to men and to angels. Two years before he had stood before the official promising by all that is most holy that he would love, honor, and protect the woman who stood by his side. Now he was wallowing in his own vomit, a degraded creature, in many respects worse than the beasts.

That Sunday morning the pastor vowed that he would faithfully warn every Christian young woman and every Christian young man with whom he should come in contact, and who might need such counsel, to beware of ever uniting with one who is an unbeliever, or disbeliever, or nonbeliever. He is fulfilling part of his vow now. In an age such as this the very best conditions for a happy marriage are needed to make it successful. To tempt fate by uniting with one who is not a believer in the Lord Jesus is bound to cause difficulty and probably disaster. Would that all would heed this warning.

Family Quarrels

From what has thus far been said some may get the impression that the husband is generally to blame if things go wrong. Although this is often true, I should in all honesty admit that there are wives who are not easy to please. It often happens that "the sweet young thing" does not turn out to be so very sweet after marriage. She becomes irritable, unreasonable, unwilling to do her share to make the common venture a success. She may never have learned to keep house, she may be an indifferent cook, and her neatness might be improved. Before marriage her husband saw her only when she was dressed up. Now she appears untidy at times, and has some habits that are very irritating. Meals are not on time, she is hard to arouse in the morning, she goes visiting too much, and in general she is not the housekeeper she should be. Both he and she begin to doubt the wisdom of their choice of a mate, and a battle royal might be expected any time. Perhaps no one thing causes the trouble, but there is a multitude of minor irritations, and both husband and wife are short on forbearance and patience.

If it were not so sad, it would be interesting to listen in" to the average family quarrel. For every accusation John makes, Mary has an answer. Were it not for the fact that John is not in a mood to listen to reason, some of Mary's answers would be quite convincing. No, she may not be as sweet as she once was, but think of what she has to put up with! She may not always be dressed up as he expects her to be, but what can he expect for the money she gets? If he would provide a little better for her so she would not have so much work to do, if he would give her more money so she could buy the clothes she needs to be up to date, she would certainly dress up. She may not be as good a cook as his mother, but neither is he as good a provider as his father. And why doesn't he get his own breakfast as many men do? She is not going to slave her life away for a man who has no appreciation of what a woman has to contend with.

And John has a very good reply for every charge brought against him. He is doing the best he can, and if he only had a little cooperation, all would be well. But what can a man do whose wife is only demanding and demanding, and who compares him to other men who are doing much better financially than he? Why didn't she marry one of that kind?

An impartial listener to such a conversation would come to the conclusion that all the right is not on one side, that the arguments are rather evenly balanced, and that if both would calm down and talk matters over quietly, all could be settled amicably. But this is not often done. Argument follows argument in endless succession, bitter feelings become more so, and before night Mary is ready to leave and go to her parents where she will not have to contend with such a brute of a husband.

Many marriages, instead of being what God intends them to be are a kind of endurance contest, husband and wife wearing out each other. Religious or other reasons may cause them to hesitate in applying for a divorce, and so they outwardly keep up the appearance of a home while inwardly they are a thousand miles apart.

Too Much Advice

One material cause of failure in married life is the intervention of other people, sometimes well meaning sometimes not, but detrimental in either case. Young people ought to live alone. Young people ought to be left alone. They should have the privilege of making their own adjustments and settling their own differences in their own way.

God knew what He did when He said that it was not good for man to be alone. He also knew what He did when He said that man should leave father and mother and cleave to his wife. (Genesis 2:24.) When God said this there was no father or mother. Adam and Eve were all that existed. It was, therefore, not a statement based on local conditions, but rather a pronouncement of a general principle. It is not good for a young married couple to live with the parents or with anybody. If they must live in the same house with others they should avoid being or becoming a part of any other household. Ordinarily it is better that some miles, and in most cases many miles, separate them from their relatives. There are many adjustments that must be made in the earlier years of marriage, and the young people should have the privilege of making them without interference of any kind.

It is often hard for a mother to become reconciled to the fact that any girl is good enough to become the wife of her son. She seems to think that she has a monopoly on the son's affection, and that for him to fall in love with any other woman is a kind of treason, and that for any woman to fall in love with her son is an attempt to separate him from her, which is not to be tolerated. In her own heart she believes that the son can never love any woman as he does her, for has she not suffered and done more for him than anyone else could possibly do? She considers it ingratitude for him to think of leaving her; and anyway, who is this slip of a girl who is trying to tempt him away?

If she must bow to the inevitable and the young people get married, they must by all means live with her. They do not have much money. They can hardly start housekeeping on their present earnings, and it would be better in many ways if they could stay at her home for a while. Also, it would give mother an opportunity to bring up the young wife in the way she should go. There are so many things she should be taught. There are so many things she does not know. What better teacher could there be than mother, who is so interested in seeing that the young people get properly adjusted?

And so the stage is set for another tragedy. And the pity of it is that in so many cases it is all well meant. The mother does not wish to hurt or hinder the young people. She is doing it all for the best. But it is not for the best. God has said that the man shall leave father and mother, and God knows. But even if God had not said this, the experience of mankind has proved that the man should leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife. It is the better way.

The case is not improved any when the mother of the wife decides that the young people need her help. For some mothers love their daughters as much as other mothers love their sons. And there are mothers who feel perfectly capable of bringing up the husband of their daughter. There is much he ought to know. There are so many things he should be taught. And the mother feels competent to give the needed advice. If the young wife who has to live with her mother in law needs sympathy, the young man who is to live with his mother-in-law may need even more.

It is no argument to say that there are cases where this combination works most advantageously to all concerned, and where the difficulties here mentioned never occur. There are also people who do not die from yellow fever, and there are cases where men are benefited from having smallpox. They are at least immune after that, but the benefit derived does not compensate for the risks incurred. It is probably best, taking all things into consideration, to agree with scripture that a man should leave father and mother.

It is not fair to subject a young wife to the scrutiny of an old, experienced housekeeper. A young wife needs to learn many things. Let her get all the information and experience that she can before marriage, but after that leave her to work out her own housekeeping salvation. She will make mistakes, but she will learn. And she should have opportunity to rectify her mistakes and try again without any interference of any kind.

In the adjustments that young people must make they should not be hindered or helped by outside advice. It is almost inevitable that whoever gives advice will also take sides. Does not fairness and justice demand that young people be given the privilege of living their own lives? It is disastrous to have someone, it matters not who, know all about the small differences that may arise. Husband and wife should both learn to keep certain matters to themselves, not telling even their dearest friends. They should learn to "leave off contention, before it be meddled with" (Proverbs 17:14), for after other people meddle with it, it will surely be worse. And other people should learn not to meddle. "Why should thou meddle to thy hurt," has general application. 2 Kings 14:10.

A Defense of Mothers in Law

Should not a word of defense be said at this time, lest the impression be left that all mothers-in-law are terrible creatures whose one desire is to ruin the happiness of others and who continually meddle in the affairs that are not theirs? Such a word should be said; it is needed.

Only a mother knows the cost of bringing a life into the world. Tenderly she watches and cares for the little one. Year after year she works and prays, sacrifices and suffers, that her child may become all that she hopes and desires. At last she succeeds in bringing him to manhood, clean, strong, eager to make his mark in the world. No wonder that the mother is interested in the one who is to be his life companion and who is to take over much of the work that she has formerly done. Will the wife take care of the son as she has done? Will she be understanding and helpful? Will she be economical and cooperative? Mother has her fears, but she must not interfere. And when the wedding takes place it is with tears that she gives over her boy to the care of another woman. To many a mother this is the supreme moment of sacrifice. But few understand. She feels alone, forsaken.

The case is no better when the daughter marries. Is the husband kind, understanding, forbearing? Is this the beginning of happiness, or of lifelong misery? True, the daughter is supremely happy in her love. Her way seems strewn with roses. But the mother thinks of the future. What will it bring? And so in the midst of happiness tears come. And again few understand. Even father does not seem to comprehend the situation. And so mother is alone again.

It is a matter of wonder that under the circumstances so few mothers-in-law attempt to interfere with the lives of their married children. Most mothers-in-law are good, sensible women, who love their children dearly but who also understand that however much their children may need them, they must not interfere in any way. And they do not. All honor to the mother-in-law. There are those who transgress, but the number is very small; and for every one that does not keep her place there are a thousand that do. We need to change our opinion of the average mother-in-law. Ordinarily she is the salt of the earth.

If we now sum up the teaching of the Bible and of Jesus on the subject of marriage, we find many things that men would do well to heed today. Marriage is not to be entered into hastily or unadvisedly. It is a lifelong union, to be broken only by death or marital infidelity. Jesus recognizes only one cause for divorce, and whoever separates for any other reason and remarries commits adultery. These are hard words. They caused even the disciples to do some real thinking. It would be well if others did some thinking also, and did it in time.

God wants all marriages to be happy and to minister to the development of a character that will admit its possessor to the realms above. This is possible if men and women relate themselves rightly to the privileges and responsibilities which marriage affords. Much patience and forbearance will be needed, but true love will make the lessons easy.

A marriage, to be successful and after God's order, must be founded on love, and religion should have its rightful place. Those who have been brought up in a Christian home with strict discipline have a better chance of success than others who have been without this training. They have learned to deny themselves, to control themselves, to work hard, not to give up easily, and not to expect to have their way always. These lessons stand them in good stead in their married life. In fact, many future marriages are ruined by the training which children receive in the home before they are ten years old. They become willful, petted, spoiled, and the same traits are carried into their adult life and greatly diminish their chances of success.

Marriage a Symbol

When the Bible speaks of the blessedness of God and His people, it uses the illustration of marriage to portray it. "Turn, O backsliding children, said the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." Jeremiah 3:14. Christ used the marriage relation in illustrating certain phases of the kingdom. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son." Matthew 22:2. The parable of the ten virgins who went forth to meet the bridegroom is familiar to all.

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes; go you out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go you rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man comes." Matthew 25:1-13.

In the book of Revelation, Christ and the church are referred to under the symbol of marriage. "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thundering, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigns. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor 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 righteousness of saints. And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said unto me, These are the true sayings of God." Revelation 19:6-9.

Paul uses the same symbolism: "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." Ephesians 5:31, 32. "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 he 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." Ephesians 5:25-27.

The Bible would not have used these illustrations if God had not intended marriage to hold a high place of honor among the institutions He has planted. God, who in the beginning made them male and female, in the marriage relation created the best possible condition for man to attain God's ideal. Man has perverted this ordinance of God as he has others. Christ, who came to restore that which had fallen into decay, also restored the sacrament of matrimony to its original status. He wants it to be held in honor and to serve the purpose of God.

21. Social Life, Recreation, And Rest

CHRIST was about thirty years old when He began His ministry. His public work did not exceed three years and a half. Within that time He had to finish the work that was given Him to do. His days and nights were filled with labor, so much so that on

occasions He had hardly time to eat. Under such circumstances it seems almost incongruous to speak of leisure time and recreation, or to believe that Christ would or could take time to consider such subjects.

Christ had come to save men from sin, to show them the way of salvation. This was His first work. To this He gave His time and energy. With the tremendous task which He had set for Himself, every precious minute allotted to Him must be used to the best advantage. Christ had come to do His work, and nothing must stand in the way of its accomplishment. He must not permit anything to hinder Him. He must finish His work. Not a moment must be wasted.

We are, therefore, almost surprised to find that Christ took time to attend social functions and other gatherings from which He could well have found good reasons for absenting Himself had He desired not to attend. From the record, however, it appears that He did not frequent these gatherings as a matter of duty only, or to give His approval to festal occasions. There is every reason to believe that He enjoyed such diversions, and that He there found a welcome change from His strenuous duties. We believe it profitable to explore this field and learn what Christ has to teach us on the subjects which form the heading of this chapter.

Come Apart and Rest

Once the disciples had been sent on a preaching tour. They had been away for some time. When they came back they had many things to tell the Master of what they had seen and done. "And he said unto them, Come you yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." Mark 6:31.

In the midst of a busy world, with tremendous issues facing Him, Jesus decided to go apart with His disciples and rest awhile. He doubtless intended to use part of the time in instructing the disciples while they were alone, for it cannot be supposed that the time of resting would be one of inactivity. But this was not the only reason. He felt that they needed a change, and that a period of rest was good for them. While there was much work to be done, and multitudes were clamoring to hear and see the Master, Jesus decided that a rest should be had. And so they went apart awhile.

There are those who neglect the body and are interested only in the soul. They believe the body to be of little consequence, and that it can be ignored without peril, and that so-called spiritual things are all that matter. Of such are those who scourge and punish the body to drive away evil, who lie on beds of spikes or waste away in cloistered cells.

There are, on the other hand, those who think highly of the body, so highly, in fact, that it receives most of their attention, and is almost worshiped. They spend their time in improving the body while they neglect spiritual and intellectual matters. Of such were the Greek athletes of old with their bodily perfection, and such are their imitators today.

Then again, there are those who neglect both body and spirit, and think only of the intellect. To them belong many of the intelligentsia of this and former times with their fine contempt for the spiritual, and their neglect of the body. They worship the intellect and consider themselves apart from common humanity.

We cannot think that God, who made the body, is not interested in the body. We cannot think that God, who made us spiritual beings, wants us to neglect the spiritual. We cannot think that God, who made the mind, does not want us to use the mind. Surely God wants us to preserve and take care of that which He has entrusted to us, and He expects to receive His own back with usury. God is interested in the whole man and wants us to reach the maximum of perfection and happiness of which we are capable.

The Abundant Life

In the sermon on the good shepherd as recorded in the tenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, Jesus describes the conduct of the faithful shepherd as contrasted with that of the hireling. The hireling does not care for the flock, and when danger threatens he flees. Not so the good shepherd. He cares for the flock, attends to its every need, protects it from danger, and is even willing to lay down his life if need be. Christ announces Himself as the good shepherd, willing to make the supreme sacrifice for the flock.

To this subject of the sheep and the shepherd Christ often reverted in His sermons. Who has not heard of and rejoiced in the parable of the lost sheep? Read it once more.

"The Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think you? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, does he not leave the ninety and nine, and goes into the mountains, and seeks that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoices more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." Matthew 18:11-14.

Note also the tender care of the shepherd as recorded by Isaiah: "He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom"; and this most tender note: "and shall gently lead those that are with young." Isaiah 40:11. We most certainly get the idea that Christ is very much concerned about His own. Nothing must harm them. He will protect them.

Here I wish to call attention to a specific statement of Christ's concerning His work as shepherd. "The thief comes not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10.

The statement, I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly," is by some thought to refer only to the future life. But I think this cannot be maintained. Christianity certainly enriches and ennobles the life that now is. Is it not true that wherever the gospel is preached in its fullness, life takes on a new meaning and becomes more satisfying in every way? It is not only the savage who profits physically from an acceptance of the gospel. The beneficent aspects of Christianity are very evident in the case of those who are living in filth and squalor, but it is also true that many civilized people are benefited by the application of religion even in a physical sense. Paul had reference to this when he said that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." I Timothy 4:8.

“Profitable unto all things.” That is what religion is. It helps a man both here and hereafter. There is no field of honest activity where a Christian who really believes in his religion is not benefited by his Christianity. At times it requires extended vision to see this, as when Joseph was in prison in Egypt, but in the long run-and sometimes not so long-it is found that godliness is profitable both for this life and for the life to come.

According to the statement in John 10: 10, Christ came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. He announced Himself as “the way, the truth, and the life,” and John states of Christ that “in Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” John 14:6; 1:4. Hence, “he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” I John 5:12.

Existence and Life

It is a wonder how many people exist but do not really live. Their interests are few; their lives are set in a very narrow groove; they know little of the teeming life about them and care less. If they have enough for daily sustenance they are satisfied. The chief distinction between men and animals is that of thinking and willing, of conscious self-direction. Yet how many there are who are willing to renounce even the use of these God-given abilities, who are perfectly satisfied to be directed from day to day by some superior or by chance, who eat and sleep and propagate their kind with not much more intelligence than their brute brothers. For such the stars have no message; the Pleiades speak to them in vain; the marvels of nature evoke no response; even the religion of Christ makes little appeal. What might not Christianity do for such were it given an opportunity!

Some years ago . Helen Keller, in a magazine article, discussed what she would do if she had three days to see and hear, and then had to go back to eternal darkness and silence again. As is well known, Helen became blind and deaf in the first years of her life. The story of her struggles to overcome almost unsurmountable handicaps, the devotion of her teacher, and her final success form one of the most thrilling chapters in the history of this generation. It should give hope and courage to all who are underprivileged and handicapped. If Helen Keller could succeed, it would almost seem that anyone could.

In telling the story of what she would desire to see and hear if three days were granted her for this purpose, she makes the observation that seeing people see but little, and hearing people hear but little. How true that is! We look but do not see; we see but do not observe. We do not begin to appreciate the blessings that are ours, nor the possibilities that are within our reach. Helen Keller asked a young girl who had just come through the woods what she had seen. “Oh, nothing in particular,” the girl answered. Then Miss Keller tells how she has gone into the woods, has felt of a leaf and noted the wonderful tracings on it, and has suddenly become thrilled as she has felt the vibrations from the singing of a bird sitting somewhere in that same tree. Oh, that she could see a bird! Oh, that she could hear it sing! How touching it is to hear of her desire to see the face of her teacher who for so many years devoted herself entirely to instructing Helen! Or of her desire to see a babe, or her faithful dog who has guided her on many a walk, or a sunset; or to hear the mighty peal of an organ. All these things we can see and hear, yet how little we appreciate them! With Helen Keller we are convinced that seeing people see but little and hearing people hear but little, and that we do not begin to appreciate as we should the wonderful privileges that are ours.

“All Things Are Yours”

Nothing that is worth while is withheld from God's children. The earth, the sea, the sky, is theirs. For them God gilds the morning skies; for them He paints the evening sunset. The flowers that bloom, the birds that fly, the stars that beckon, the trees that whisper-all are theirs and carry their own message of God's goodness and greatness. The ocean, the mountains, the mighty woods, the vast prairie, the desert sand shall speak of their Creator. There is no living creature of God, be it insect or roaming beast of the wild, but serves some purpose. The observant child of God sees the hand of the Creator in the things He has made, and knows that it is for him they exist. “All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's.” I Corinthians 3:21-23. Why should we not get more out of and put more into life?

There are moments in our lives when we really live, moments big in importance or portent. We feel at such a moment that we have all that life can hold, and that any more would be too much. It may be some great joy, present or anticipated. It may be the last miles of a journey that will bring us to a loved one, and we can hardly wait. It may be the reception of some great news that will alter our lives completely. It may be the fulfillment of some prayer, the yearning of a lifetime. It was under some such stress that Paul said, “Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.” I Thessalonians 3:8.

Christ came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. Life is measured not by length but by depth. It is not how long we live but how deeply we live that counts. Some live more in a few months than others do in a lifetime.

Who has not attended a social function and seen some young people decidedly uninterested in what was going on. Perhaps someone played on the piano, but they were not interested. Someone gave a reading, but they took no notice. There was a resume of events in the world during the last month-world-stirring events-but it did not stir them. Then suddenly they woke up. Someone recounted something in which they were interested-a prize fight, a tennis game, or a football match. They had been utterly oblivious of the other matters, but suddenly they began to live. They were awake, animated, interested. The whole atmosphere changed. They now became a part of the party. Something in which they were interested was under discussion.

Two go to hear an artist sing. One responds with his whole being, is thrilled, almost transported at the wonderful artistry, and inspired by the message in song; the other is bored at the to him meaningless performance. Two go to hear a famous violinist play. One feels that heaven is brought a little nearer; the other hears a confused jumble of sounds, “horsehair scraping on catgut.” Two go to see a sunset over the ocean. One sees the handiwork of God; the other sees rain the next day.

Two go to see the majestic Himalayan Mountains. One sees in them “the raised letters of God on which the blind earth children spell out the name of God”; the other observes that no corn can be grown there. Two go to see the Grand Canyon. One stands

awestruck at the majestic sight; the other ventures the opinion that it is certainly a large hole in the ground. Two see a costly box of ointment. One sees in it a gift from a heart overflowing with love; the other sees a great waste of money. Two see a man hanging on a tree. One sees the Savior of the world; the other, a theological absurdity.

Thus men may look at the same things, but how different are their reactions! Some are bored, weary of life; they see beauty in nothing and are always complaining. Others are full of the joy of living, are using every moment, are living a life full, complete, satisfying. May we not believe that when Christ says He has come that we might have life and have it more abundantly, He refers to this life as well as the one to come? Life is both richer and fuller as we follow Christ's program.

Why should not the Christian be the happiest being on earth? Does he not have every reason to be thankful? Are not all things his? He not only has promise of the life that now is, but of that which is to come.

What Is Recreation?

It is not easy to be happy and content when one is sick. For that reason we cannot believe that God wants His people to be sick. When Christ was here on earth, He healed as many as wanted to be healed and who had faith. The record repeats the statement over and over that Christ healed all. (Matthew 4:23; 8:16; 9:35; Luke 4:40; 6:19.) If Christ had His way, there would be no sickness. He wants His people to be well, even as John puts it: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou may prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospers." 3 John 2.

Good health is in a large measure dependent upon food, work, rest, recreation, attitude of mind, and protection from the elements. At this time we wish to discuss recreation. As we define it, recreation has to do with the whole man, not merely the physical. Recreation is, of course, re-creation, to create anew, to reanimate, revive, refresh, give fresh life to. Although it includes the physical, it is not confined to it. The mind needs refreshment as well as the body. The social instincts need reanimation. We need to be stirred up in spiritual things. We need constantly a fresh supply of life, lest we become sluggish mentally, spiritually, and physically. It is in this larger sense that we use the word recreation.

We take it for granted that God in the beginning provided all that was needed for man's well being. The work that Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden was doubtless intended, partly at least, to provide them with exercise. This, of course, does not mean that they were always to work. But even when they did work, it was pleasant outdoor work, healthful, and invigorating. They were not, as are many today, confined within four walls, there to work in a cramped position, bending over their task. Much manual labor, especially as it is conducted in factories, is of the kind that develops the arms and the back, but tends to cramp and deflate the chest. This is true also of many of the trades.

In the beginning it was not so. Adam and Eve lived in a garden. In that garden were many trees. Much of their work would therefore consist in stretching and reaching up, the very kind of exercise that tends to build up and strengthen health. Their work was outdoors with plenty of fresh air and exercise. They had good health to begin with; all they needed to do was to preserve what they had.

How different this is from today. Many have but feeble health. They live in unhealthful surroundings; their work requires them to be indoors much of the time. They live in a city where it is impossible to have even a small garden. What are they to do?

Some will be quick to say that they might move out into the country; but there are circumstances where this cannot be done. Many must do the best they can where they are. Certainly, the ideal is to be surrounded with the beauties of nature and daily drink in the life-giving breezes uncontaminated by the soot and dirt of the city. But husband, wife, children, or occupation, keep many in surroundings where they would rather not be. What are such to do?

We believe it to be the duty of all in such circumstances to secure the best in recreation that their neighborhood affords. There are parks and open-air spaces in even the most congested of our cities, where the family at times can repair for recreation and diversion. There are innocent games that can be engaged in, children and parents taking part. There are outings to near-by lakes, or woods or mountains or streams, where a day or part of a day can be spent in happy converse with the things of the outdoors.

Jesus' Attitude

Our task, however, is not to give instruction in methods of recreation, but rather to discover Jesus' attitude toward it. Some appear honestly to believe that Jesus frowned on all such, that He was always sober, that He never smiled or laughed, and that He looked with disapproval on everything of a light nature. Let us, therefore, attempt to ascertain His attitude.

I have already stated that it is a matter of surprise to some that Jesus spent any time in activities other than those which bore directly upon His work. How could He take time to attend weddings, banquets, feasts? Knowing that He was about to die, how could He attend any festive occasion?

Jesus did nothing inconsistent with His announced lifework. In attending feasts and banquets, He was doing a part of the work for which He came. One with deep insight in spiritual matters says of this:

"The true fast is no mere formal service. The Scripture describes the fast that God has chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke;' to 'draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul.' Here is set forth the very spirit and character of the work of Christ. His whole life was a sacrifice of Himself for the saving of the world. Whether fasting in the wilderness of temptation or eating with the publicans at Matthew's feast, He was giving His life for the redemption of the lost. Not in idle mourning, in mere bodily humiliation and

multitudinous sacrifices, is the true spirit of devotion manifested, but it is shown in the surrender of self in willing service to God and man.” - The Desire of Ages, page 278.

Christ attended feasts and social gatherings. But “whether fasting in the wilderness of temptation or eating with the publicans at Matthew’s feast, He was giving His life for the redemption of the lost.” There were some who thought that He ought not to attend such festivities. They called Him a gluttonous man and a wine drinker. (Luke 7:34.) Others thought He ought to fast rather than to eat with publicans and sinners. (Mark 2:16.)

We confess that it must have been puzzling to some to see the young Nazarene, who had just announced that He was headed for the cross, sit down to a feast while John was languishing in prison. How could He feast while others were fasting? Evidently He did not take Himself or His message seriously, or He would fast as did others. In their perplexity some of John’s disciples came to Him and asked, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?” Matthew 9:14. To this Jesus answered, “Can the children of the bride chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.” Matthew 9:15.

Christ a Social Being

This particular incident is interesting as illustrating the general attitude of Jesus. He was a social being. Although there were times when He wanted to be alone, often He sought the society of others. He did not shun men. He could have found valid reasons for not accepting certain invitations, but it is not on record that He rejected any. On occasions He even invited Himself, as in the case of Zacchaeus. (Luke 19:5.)

We believe that we are right in concluding that not only did Jesus not shun social functions but He took pleasure in attending them. He could truly have said, I have only a short time in which to do My work. I must not take time for that which is not pressingly important for the finishing of My task.” But He did not so say. He went to these functions, and whereas we may believe that He went chiefly to do good, we may also believe that these gatherings were not distasteful to Him, but that He enjoyed the society of others. Are we wrong in concluding that the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus was a haven of refuge to Him, and that He found there the rest and peace and understanding which His heart craved?

The record gives us every reason to believe that Jesus was not a hermit but a social being with well-developed social tendencies. He mingled with men. He loved men. We cannot escape the conclusion that His attending so many social functions was more than a happening or a necessity. It was a definite part of His general plan of work, and social activities -always, of course, taking for granted that they are of the right kind-have His approval and blessing.

Jesus loved the common people. He associated with them; He was one with them. He loved little children, and they loved Him. I seriously doubt that the little ones would have gathered about Him had He never smiled or laughed. He laid His hands upon them and blessed them; and when the disciples attempted to hinder it, Jesus “was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.” Mark 10:14-16.

Jesus would not have needed to take the children “up in his arms.” If He had only wanted to impress the people, He might have taken one child and made the demonstration with him. But the statement is that “he took them up in his arms.” He did that because He loved them. We can almost see the little ones vie with one another to be lifted up. And children do not “take to” a person who is morose and never smiles. Evidently Jesus was not that kind.

The picture which we get of Jesus in the Gospels is that of a cheerful, happy person, whose habitual greeting was, “Be of good cheer.” (Matthew 9:2; 14:27; Mark 6:50; John 16:33.) Wherever He went He healed the people and brought happiness and joy. He mingled freely with all, sat down to eat with publicans and sinners-to the great dismay of the Pharisees-and told those who came to inquire why He and His disciples did not fast, that this was no time to mourn. (Mark 2:16; Matthew 9:15.) Those who picture Jesus as a recluse, with pale, sunken cheeks and generally emaciated features, do not get their impression from the record in the Bible.

True Religion and True Education

Jesus came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. This life includes the whole man. The full life cannot be lived on the physical level alone. As a social creature, man desires and needs companionship; as a thinking being he needs mental stimulation; as a spiritual being he needs fellowship with God.

In some machinery a balance wheel or governor is needed to make it perform properly and steadily. Men are in need of the same. Left without a governor, man performs irrationally and cannot be depended upon. With a governor to guide him he can be set to useful tasks for God and humanity, and can become a real blessing to his fellow men. True religion furnishes such a governor.

Education without religion, skill without character, may be a curse rather than a blessing. If a man is a bad man, education will make him more expert in his badness. A criminal who is skillful is a worse menace than one who is not. Only as education is balanced by character is it of value to mankind. Without it, education is a curse.

Lest this seem harsh judgment, let us consider the situation. A medical education may be a great blessing, and in most cases is. But what shall we say of the highly skilled illegal practitioner, who uses his education for diabolical purposes? What shall we say of the lawyer whose talents are devoted to helping criminals escape the just deserts of the law, letting them loose to prey again upon society and cause untold agony to bereaved parents and bring fear and terror to whole communities? What shall we say of the skillful

counterfeiter; the successful adulterator of food for human consumption; the large-scale manipulator of wildcat promotion schemes that entrap the unwary; the “brain” behind the international narcotic ring, which traffics in human misery; the “higher ups” in white slave transactions?

All these might ply their trades to a certain extent even if they had less education and less skill. Their advanced education has not helped them be better men. It has helped them to be more skillful; it has helped them to do their nefarious work with better success. That which might have been a blessing to them and to society has become a curse, because it was not balanced by character, which alone can make education of real and permanent value.

I believe most fully in education, but I cannot believe in an education that leaves out religion, that leaves out character. It has become a question with some people who are not religious, but who see the trend of the times, whether science has not progressed further than the character of the people will warrant. No nation can long endure or prosper that has an unduly large number of highly trained men who are without correspondingly high moral convictions. Old-fashioned integrity, high moral principles, and a lively sense of his responsibility to society should be required of every candidate before he is entrusted with special skills. Unless this is done, society is merely feeding the vampires that suck its lifeblood, and giving men and women an education which will later be used for the exploitation of those who have made their education possible. This is not good sense or good religion.

Sound moral principles, an understanding of one's obligation to his fellow men, and a sensible application of the golden rule-in short, religion-are necessary to a complete and satisfying life. It was this that Jesus came to give. Nothing less than this will do. He who wishes to get the most out of life must learn the secret of it. That secret lies in giving rather than in grasping. There is true satisfaction in nothing else.

Enlarging One's Interest

Ordinarily the better a man is educated, the better he should be prepared to live and to enjoy life. A geologist can spend months in a desert place examining rocks, every moment being of the highest interest to him, where the uninformed man would be at a loss to know what to do, and could find no possible source of interest in what to him appears a mere collection of common rocks. Thus it is with the artist, the engineer, the scientist. They have fields of interest that make life much more meaningful in their particular line.

And yet with all their learning some of them have not learned much about life. In their specific field they may be interested, but there are other fields just as vital, just as interesting, of which they know little and care less. There are great possibilities for all to enlarge the horizon of life, include fields not before explored, and live the larger, fuller, more satisfying life of which man is capable.

We cannot conceive of Christ's omitting any vital phase of life and of being uninterested in it. He loved nature and held communion with tree and flower, earth, sea, and sky. He was interested in daily life and duties, and used them to illustrate vital lessons. It might be a woman sweeping her house, or kneading dough, or patching a garment; it might be a man working in the field, sowing or reaping, or pulling weeds. It might be a carpenter building a house, a fisherman mending his net, a laborer working in the vineyard; it might be a soldier attempting to take unlawful advantage, a Pharisee entering the home of a widow on pretense of religion, a publican sitting at the scat of custom. It might be a tower falling and killing some men, a Jew robbed on the way to Jericho, or “that fox” Herod laying some nefarious plan. It might be children playing in the streets, the cost of sparrows in the market place, or the daily wage of the laborer-all was familiar to Christ. He was interested in it, and used it to point a lesson. Nothing that was of interest to man was foreign to Him. He lived with and understood the people.

An Educational Housecleaning

Education often tends to remove a man from men, make him a recluse, a self-centered individual whose chief concern is the acquisition of more and more knowledge, not for dissemination but for absorption, not to bless others but to enrich self. And often the more highly educated a man is, the narrower is his field of knowledge, until in his final doctor's thesis he spends months and years of time and energy on some ridiculously small field far removed from human concern or interest.

it is possible for education to limit a man's outlook and interests instead of broadening them. In fact, much of the education in vogue today is of that kind. It is remarkable how much knowledge and how little sense some people have; how great scholastic degrees and how small human interests; how much some know of the molars of prehistoric animals, and how little they know of the underfed and underprivileged children in their own city. The educational system and methods are under fire today, and rightly so. There must be a restatement of educational values, a re-evaluation of objectives, a much clearer vision of the real intent of education if it is to accomplish what the times demand. Much that is obsolete remains and must be swept away. There are some hopeful signs, but not enough. A complete housecleaning is demanded.

An education without the inculcation of sound moral precepts is of doubtful value; or as has been said previously, it may even be of definite harm. Aside from the purely moral aspects, how far inferior is mere technical, or what might be called worldly, education to Christian education which concerns the whole man! In spite of appearances, man is a spiritual being, and finds his highest development and greatest joy in spiritual attainments. To educate the body, or the mind, or both, is not sufficient. The heart, the spirit, the soul, must be educated, and to leave these out means stunted growth, dwarfed ambitions, perverted perspectives and diminished lives. Some people can live with one lung; others who have two lungs use only half of what they have; some people live without a stomach and get along after a fashion. So some attempt to get along without religion. They are satisfied, as the blind fish are satisfied who live in caves in perpetual darkness. They do not feel their loss. So much the more pity.

Christ came to give men a larger vision of the possibilities before them. He came that men might live, really live. He came to open before them the possibilities of the spiritual realm, to let the prisoners go free, liberate the human slaves of tradition and open

wide the doors to the eternal world and let men enter in. He came that men might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

Remember, Christ is interested in the whole man, the physical, the social, the intellectual, the spiritual. For this reason the plan of salvation embraces all phases, no one to the exclusion of others. We should, therefore, not be surprised when we find that Christ invites His disciples to come apart and rest a while, for rest is a definite part of man's physical need. Christ wanted His followers to know that however urgent a work may seem, there is time for rest as well as for work.

Nor should we be surprised to find Jesus accepting invitations to social occasions, for this is also a part of the education that men need. The true Christian cannot be an ascetic. The gospel deals with men, and a man must love men if he is to do much for them. To separate oneself from the rest of humankind and to live apart is opposed to the genius of the gospel. Jesus was a lover of mankind.

The Bible as an Educational Agency

Jesus was a thorough student of the Bible and a close observer of nature, as His frequent allusions testify. The rabbinical sophistries He rejected, and for pharisaical interpretations He had little use. Yet even at an early age He both asked and answered questions that opened new fields of knowledge to the hearers. "It is written," "Have you not read?" "How reads thou?" "Moses commanded you"; and similar expressions showed His deep knowledge of the law. This knowledge was so profound that those who were sent to entrap Him in words found they were worsted in the argument. "No man was able to answer him a word, neither dared any man from that day forth ask him any more questions." Matthew 22:46.

There are some who depreciate the value of the Bible as an educational agency. Such do not know the Book. With all the progress that has been made in science and inventions since the writing of the Scriptures, the Bible still stands supreme. Though it was not written to be a textbook in science or history, the principles it contains are of enduring and eternal value and cannot safely be ignored by this or any other generation. This cannot be said of any other book in existence, and sets the Bible apart from other writings, ancient or modern. I do not contend that it is a compendium on all subjects; but I do contend that without a knowledge of it no man is truly educated, and that with a thorough knowledge of it no man can be said to be uneducated, even in this year of our Lord. This again constitutes it a unique volume.

Christ was the man of the Book. Yet who will affirm that He was uneducated? His insight into the things which concern man stamps Him as a profound thinker, a deep philosopher, a successful psychologist and psychiatrist, an unrivaled leader of men. Humanly speaking, He would hold His own with the best minds of today, and in a discussion concerning the deep things of God and men, those who would entrap Him in words would now, as then, retire from the field and ask no more questions lest they expose their own folly. No, Christ considered merely as a man, having received His education from the Bible, would not in intellectual grasp or thinking be behind the best men today. In truth, He would be immeasurably superior.

Let no one depreciate the value of the Bible as an educating agency. It has held its own these many centuries, and it will yet be demonstrated that it has not lost its power. God has a care for His Book.

The Sabbath and Recreation

The chief holy day in the time of Christ was the Sabbath. There were other days during the year which were observed in their season, but there was only one day which was a weekly festival. This was the Sabbath of the Lord. On that day no work was to be done, and it became wholly a day of worship.

How did Christ observe this day? What did He do? What did He require of others? Is there anything in His customs or precepts which might help and guide us in our observance of the Sabbath day? With the present lamentable disregard of the Sabbath among Christians and non-Christians alike, what would be Christ's attitude and advice were He here to counsel and direct?

In this we have the guide of His example. We are assured that with God there is no variableness or shadow of turning, so we know that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (James 1: 17; Hebrews 13:8.) We therefore presume that what Jesus did then He would do now, and that what He did then constitutes our authority for doing the same now.

The scribes and Pharisees had made innumerable regulations of what might and might not be done on the Sabbath. This we have discussed elsewhere, and it need not here be repeated. Did Jesus observe these regulations? He did not. He swept them all aside and restored the Sabbath to mankind as God had originally given it. Let us consider this.

Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was His custom. (Luke 4:16.) When invited to do so, He read the Scriptures and spoke to the people. On one occasion—that of a visit to His home church—we are told that He chose His text from the book of Isaiah. The eyes of all the people were upon Him as He began to speak, and they "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." Luke 4:22.

The "custom" which Jesus had of going to church on the Sabbath is one worthy of emulation. The apostle tells us that we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as is the custom of some. (Hebrews 10:25.) Many so-called Christians have a custom of absenting themselves from divine worship on the Sabbath. Christ gave no such example. On the contrary, He was in the habit of going to church, and His followers should cultivate the same habit. It is a very wholesome one.

Christ's sermon to His home church in Nazareth did not please the hearers any more than some sermons do today. At first the people were delighted at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth, but by the time He was done they were "filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way." Luke 4:28-30.

If we study the sermon which caused the people to be filled with wrath, we find that Jesus was very careful in His utterances, that He did not give any just cause for offense, and that the people were absolutely without excuse for their conduct.

This is in contrast to some ministers who seem to take delight in irritating people, who use the pulpit to vent personal spite, who even make gossip a topic of public discussion. The pulpit is a place for the preaching of the Word, not for the settling of personal scores. We have known ministers to attack the dead and wound the living, and use the occasion of a great sorrow to traduce those who have passed on, and add needlessly to the sorrow of those who mourn. In the eyes of men and of God such conduct is contemptible and deserves rebuke. Men that do thus show an attitude of mind that makes it an almost hopeless task to attempt any reform. They are unworthy of their ambassadorship.

Healing on the Sabbath

One Sabbath after Christ had preached to the people in a synagogue, “the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the Sabbath day, that they might find an accusation against him.” Luke 6:7. The record reads thus: “But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other. And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.” Luke 6:8-11.

Mark, in recording the incident, says that when Jesus “looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he said unto the man, Stretch forth your hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.” Mark 3:5.

It was a great grief to Jesus that leaders could be so blind as to think that healing a man on the Sabbath was sin. Was not the Sabbath given to man, and should it not be used for doing good? Men had so perverted the Sabbath that Jesus looked upon them with anger, a most unusual thing for Him to do. He knew what it meant for Him to heal the man on the Sabbath. He knew that the Pharisees would immediately lay plans to kill Him. This they did. They were “filled with madness,” and “straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.” Luke 6: 11; Mark 3:5.

Under these circumstances why did Jesus not wait until the Sabbath was past and then heal the man? Surely, the man could wait that long and no harm would be done. But Jesus did not compromise. He did not wait. He healed the man. It was at terrific cost that it was done.

It should not be thought, however, that this was an isolated instance. It was apparently part of a definite plan of Christ to heal on the Sabbath day. Read this story.

“There was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from your infirmity. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day. The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day? And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.” Luke 13:11-17.

Here was a woman who had been sick eighteen years. She could have waited one more day for healing without great harm. But Jesus did not wait. He did not evade the challenge. Here was a plain case where men were perverting one of the most beautiful gifts of God to men, the holy Sabbath day, and not for one moment would Christ compromise. The issue was clear. In Christ's view there was only one thing to do, and He did it. It might cost His life, but that was not to be considered when men were making of no effect one of the commandments of God and destroying it. And so Christ healed the woman.

The Disciples Pluck Corn

Healing was not the only difficulty that Jesus had with reference to the Sabbath. “At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day. But he said unto them, Have you not read what David did, when he was an hungered, and they that were with him. How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the show bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day.” Matthew 12:1-8.

What are we to learn from these examples of what Christ did on the Sabbath? Are we to draw the inference that on the Sabbath we may do as we please, and that we do not need to be careful of its observance? Or are we to understand that the Sabbath is given for man's benefit, and that on that day we may do God's errands, go to church, help those who are in need, and generally do deeds of love and mercy? We believe the latter to be the right inference.

The difficulty which Christ had with the Pharisees concerning the Sabbath did not arise from a dispute as to whether the Sabbath commandment was binding or not. On that question there was no difference of opinion. Christ stood solidly for the law, as might be expected. “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven:

but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:17-19. “It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.” Luke 16: 17.

Had Christ in any way hinted that He was in favor of the abrogation of the law or of any part of it, the whole Jewish nation would have arisen as one man and brought Him before their tribunal for sedition. But this was not the issue. The question was rather, What is lawful to do on the Sabbath day? In other words, How are we to keep the Sabbath day holy? This is as important for us as it was for them.

The Sabbath for Man

In the dispute concerning the disciples' plucking ears of corn on the Sabbath and eating them, Christ had ended His argument by saying, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” Mark 2:27,28. When Jesus says that He is Lord of the Sabbath, this can mean no other than that He claims jurisdiction over it, that He can do with it as He pleases, that He is all that the words indicate: Lord of the Sabbath. This would exclude any other from being lord of it, or in any way exercising control of it. Christ only is its Lord. Governments are out of their sphere when they attempt to legislate concerning it. Men are out of their sphere when they attempt to coerce others in regard to the Sabbath and its observance. Christ is Lord, and He only is Lord, of the Sabbath.

Jesus had deep reverence for all the ordinances of God. This He showed in a striking way at the time He cleansed the Temple. Here is the record. “They come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves. And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.” Mark 11:15,16. Jesus was so reverent of the Temple that He would not permit that even a vessel be carried through it. And this was the Temple that in a few months would be forsaken of God and later destroyed! This shows the reverence which Jesus had for that which was considered sacred. We may believe that He had the same reverence for all sacred institutions, including the Sabbath. He Himself was Lord of it, He had made and instituted it, He had commanded men to keep it, and now He was showing them how it should be kept.

The God who in the beginning made heaven and earth rested the seventh day.” Exodus 20: 11. We are told that “the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shall not do any work. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day, wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.” Verses 10, 11.

We cannot suppose that God was weary and that He needed a physical rest. “The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary.” Isaiah 40:28. What He did in the matter of Sabbath keeping at the end of creation week was by way of example. He not only told men what to do; He showed them the way.

We have no objection to physical rest on the Sabbath; in fact, that is one of the things we understand is meant by the statement that we are to do all our work in six days, and rest on the seventh day. Whatever our ordinary work may be, we are to abstain from it on the Sabbath. But physical rest is not all that is enjoined on the Sabbath. If so, all we would need to do to observe the day would be to stay in bed. There is more to the observance of the Sabbath than physical rest.

My mind is called to the case of a man I knew whose idea of Sabbath keeping was staying in bed until a late hour, getting up toward noon, eating a hearty meal, and lying down again. Being gorged with food and lying down to rest was his conception of perfect bliss. We reject any such coarse idea of what God's rest means. Even as God rested in the beginning and was refreshed, so God wants man now to rest and be refreshed; but this rest must not be put on a physical basis only. Man needs that which God did not-rest from the weariness and toil of the week; but this rest must not consist solely in inactivity. Even on the Sabbath we are to do something. We are to do good. This is lawful. (Mark 3:4.)

The night is primarily given for physical rest. There is night on the Sabbath as well as on the other days of the week, and this night time is given for physical rest. The light part of the Sabbath may also be used for rest, but not primarily physical. There are so many things that need to be done and for which we have no time during the week, that God has given us one day which we may devote to certain tasks. What are they?

Is there any significance in the fact that the commandment says, “six days shall thou labor and do all thy work?” Is that a suggestion that while we are to do our work for six days, we are to do God's work on the Sabbath? The Old Testament gives this instruction concerning the keeping of the Sabbath: if thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable. And shall honor him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words: then shall thou delight thyself in the Lord. And I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” Isaiah 58:13, 14.

This states plainly that on the Sabbath we are not to find our own ways, seek our own pleasure, or speak our own words. By inference we would suppose that we should find God's way, His pleasure, and His words, that we are to delight ourselves in the Lord, “and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable.”

What May Be Done on the Sabbath

On the Sabbath, Jesus went about doing good. He went to church; He preached; He healed. We shall not go far astray in following His example. According to Him, the Sabbath may be used for doing good, for helping others, for ministering to the needy, for bringing cheer to all.

According to the last text quoted above, the Sabbath should be a delight. It cannot be this and be a gloomy day at the same time. If we observe the Sabbath as Jesus did, it will be a delight not only to ourselves but to others. We cannot heal people as Jesus did on the Sabbath. But there are many other things we can do to make it a delightful day of cheer and happiness.

Suppose Christians made it a practice to visit the sick and shut-ins on that day after having attended divine service. Suppose on that day visits were made to state farms, to children's hospitals, to homes for the incurable, to institutions for crippled children, to homes for the aged. Suppose the young people spent a little time that day as organized singing bands to cheer the convalescent; suppose they visited poor families and brought them baskets of food or clothing for the children, or a doll or some other plaything. Suppose they wrote a letter or two with a word of encouragement to some person in need of a little cheer, or offered to take care of the children while some worn-out mother got a needed rest. Might not work of this kind make a delightful day of the Sabbath not only for oneself but also for others?

I can almost hear the objections which these suggestions bring. Some of the young people will say that this is too much like religion, too much like missionary work. Others might think that it is too much like ordinary work, and that the Sabbath is given for rest.

But would not these proposals be in harmony with what Christ would do were He here? Would they not make the Sabbath a delight in every way? Is there anything more satisfying than doing something for someone else? Is real happiness to be found any other way than by doing good to others? Would not the Sabbath be a day looked forward to in hospitals and in all institutions for the temporarily or permanently incapacitated, if on that day all Christians made it a practice to do something for someone else? If all who profess the name of Christ went about doing good, it would not be long until men called the "Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable." And this would be indeed pleasing to the Lord.

A Cheerful Religion

Why is it that some otherwise honorable and good people, Christians, have a way of making all things religious distasteful and unattractive? Their religion seems to be a series of don'ts, a negative Christianity consisting of prohibitions, till many people get the idea that they delight in making other people miserable, and that they are not happy unless they do. Children especially feel this way, and many are the young people who decide that when they grow up they are going to get away from all religion, merely because religion was made so unattractive to them as children. I have in mind a family in which the parents believed that the Sabbath occasionally should be a day of fasting and prayer. This included the children, even the little ones. And what a day it was, as may be imagined! The children had no conception of the meaning of fasting; they had no desire to fast; they were hungry and wanted something to eat. But the parents believed in fasting, so the children went hungry. What a travesty on religion! Seeds were sown that grew into a hatred of religion, and especially of the Sabbath. Why cannot Christians show more wisdom?

The young children especially need attention on the day of the Lord. They must not get the idea that the Sabbath is a day of don'ts, a day when they may not do this and they may not do that. In church they must sit still. This they ought to learn to do, for without an ingrown sense of reverence any child is handicapped for life. But make it as easy for them as possible. If the pastor can be persuaded to address himself to the children occasionally, rejoice and be exceedingly glad. If that cannot be done, perhaps meetings for the children can be inaugurated. They need not be elaborate, and the speakers need not be paid instructors. The children like to sing, so let them sing. They have no objection to singing the old songs over and over. They have no objection to learning new songs. So teach them. Give simple talks. Talk about things in which they are interested. Ask them questions. Let them answer. Use a blackboard, even if it is small, and even if only a line is drawn by way of illustration. Let them recite poems they know, or texts they have learned. Show genuine interest in them, and even if some professional child instructor may consider the work crude, it may be a great success in the minds of the children and pay rich dividends in the years to come. If there is genuine love for the children, some way will be found to hold them. The same Jesus who took little children into His arms while here on earth still loves them, and He will assist anyone who is willing to devote time to the little ones. It is still true that "of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Children love to be outdoors. Why should not part of the Sabbath be spent among the trees and flowers? Why should not the children be taught to identify the different kinds of trees and flowers, and become acquainted with individual specimens? Why should they not be taught to know birds, their songs, their habits? Why should not insects interest them? They may early learn beautiful and precious lessons that will remain a lifelong pleasure. If Jesus were here, He would do something of this kind for the children. We believe that He would take a group of children with Him, go into the woods and there tell them of the wonderful things of nature. He would pluck a flower, show them its beautiful structure, and tell them of the wonderful God who has made such beautiful things. He would teach them religion—not in an offensive or artificial way, but naturally and in an attractive manner. Religion would be made to appear desirable, not mandatory, and goodness and virtue would attract, not repel. His love for the children would be genuine, and they would instinctively follow Him. The children would not get the idea that it is hard to be a Christian. It would appear to them as the natural and right thing to be.

The Sabbath is the gift of God. It constitutes a wonderful opportunity for the practical demonstration of Christianity, and the working out of it in the individual life. There is no gainsaying a life. A doctrine can be disputed, an argument can be met. But a life lived testifies in a way that not only can be understood but cannot be misunderstood. With all the opposition Jesus had, with all the contradiction of sinners, when He challenged them as to His life, there was silence. "Which of you convinces me of sin?" Jesus asked. John 8:46. They could bring no charge. His life was the light. That condemned them.

To abstain from work is not necessarily to rest. Often a change of occupation is more restful than inaction. It is apparently on this principle that God wants us to keep the Sabbath. He wants us to work for Him, He wants us to do the work He would were He here. On the Sabbath, God invites us to go first of all to the place of worship, there to listen to His word. Then we are to go about as He did, doing good. This is acceptable worship in His sight. This is true Sabbath keeping.

Conclusions

God is interested in the creatures He has made. He wants them to prosper and be in health. When Jesus was here on earth He healed all that came to Him of whatever diseases they were afflicted. Whereas it may be contended that He was chiefly interested in the welfare of their souls, it should be noted that He spent more time in healing than in preaching. This would seem to show that He was genuinely interested in the physical welfare of men.

The conservation of health includes a correct attitude of mind, attention to diet, sleep, rest, work, clothing, recreation, leisure time, and social activities. All these must be taken into account if health is to be maintained.

Christ, who is our example in all things, was to use a modern phrase well adjusted socially. Despite the urgency of His work, He took time to mingle with His fellow men in a social way. He ate with publicans and sinners. He attended weddings. He accepted invitations to banquets. Even as a boy at His first visit to the Temple He joined the multitude that gathered about the teachers of the Temple, and Himself asked and answered questions. He felt at home with people and sought them out. The social hours He spent with Mary and Martha and Lazarus in their quiet home testify to His desire for human companionship and society. His friendly ways endeared Him to the little children, and mothers sought Him for counsel. Had Jesus been stern and forbidding, had He been a kill joy, He would never have received the invitations that He did. Wherever He went He was welcome.

From this we can learn much. Christianity should be made attractive; it should be made social. Jesus made it so. Cheerful and happy, He went about His work, spreading sunshine as He went. He was not morose or brooding; nor was He unhappy, filled with foreboding. Yet if any man ever had occasion to be disheartened, it was Jesus. He knew that the multitudes that followed Him would forsake Him. He knew that even His own would leave Him in the hour of trial. He knew that the cross awaited Him. But He was not daunted. He was not downcast or discouraged. Evil might prevail for a season, but in the end all would be well. Jesus was the greatest optimist of His time and of all time.

Jesus' life was not all work. He took time for study and meditation, and He also took time for rest. He invited the disciples to come apart and rest a while. (Mark 6:31.) Though this text has reference to spiritual rest, it no doubt includes physical rest also.

Jesus was much interested in the proper observance of the Sabbath. The tradition of the Jews forbade them to do on the Sabbath day anything that savored of work, even though it might be necessary to the relief of suffering. They were permitted to walk only a short distance on that day, though the same ingenuity that invented these rules also enabled them to find means of evading them. On the whole, the Sabbath was not a delight to them but a burden. Jesus restored it to its original purpose and gave to man the Sabbath as God intended it from the beginning. His example teaches us what we may do and what we may not do. Following His footsteps, we find the Sabbath a delight, not a day of gloom, as was the Puritan Sunday, nor a day of hilarity and sinful pleasure, as is common today. As God's gift to man, it becomes a day of worship, a day of gladness, a day of service and of good tidings.

All need to come back to the simplicity of the religion of Christ; simplicity of faith, simplicity of life, simplicity of dress, simplicity of recreation, simplicity of social standards and intercourse. Life is becoming mechanized, religion is becoming institutionalized, and individual accountability to God is being taken over by state or church. Man needs to be placed again face to face with his Maker, with no earthly mediator between, neither priesthood nor saints, public or church official. The aim of the religion of Jesus Christ is to restore to man all that was lost when He departed from God. The day is nearing when this will be done. The Lord is coming. The church needs to pray with the apostle, "Come, Lord Jesus." Revelation 22:20.

22. The New Testament Sabbath

THERE is a widespread opinion that the Sabbath which God instituted in Eden is not binding in the new dispensation. This opinion is favored by the fact that many Christians observe the first day of the week instead of the seventh, the day which God in the beginning sanctified and blessed. This is an important subject and should be thoroughly explored. In a matter affecting one of the Ten Commandments, God alone must be our authority. We dare not let any man, however great or wise, be the deciding factor.

The record reads, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." The Old Testament knows only one Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. God commanded Israel to keep holy the day which He at creation sanctified, and embodied this precept in the Ten Commandments. So far as the law is concerned, the record is clear: "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord." Exodus 20:10.

A Change in the Fourth Commandment

It would seem that if there is to be a change in the fourth commandment, the proposed change should be made definitely known and announced. That is, if, beginning at a certain time God should demand that men henceforth keep the first day of the week instead of the seventh, this should be publicly and plainly stated, not only so that it could be understood, but so that it could not be misunderstood. This is essential.

God is in the habit of speaking plainly. Look at any of the commandments and see how concisely and definitely each of them conveys its message. There is no way of misunderstanding any of them. No one can ever say that he did not know his duty because God did not make it clear.

One of the essentials of law is that it must be so worded that its meaning is plain. And this must especially be true of the law of God; for the punishment for its transgression is so tremendous that it would be the height of crime to hold men responsible for its

violation if there were the least possibility of its intent being misunderstood. God could never face His creatures in the judgment; He would cease to be a God of justice if He did not make plain His will. We say it reverently: God must make our duty plain.

Such clearness of intent is necessary even in the smallest police ordinances. If for good and sufficient reasons a city should decide not to allow left-hand turns at certain corners, and should pass the necessary ordinance and put up signs saying, "No left-hand turn," the meaning of the ordinance would be clear. If after a while the city fathers should change their minds and decide that left-hand turns should be permitted and right-hand turns forbidden, it would be their privilege to do so. It would, however, be necessary to give due notice of the fact, and rescind the left-hand-turn ordinance, substitute the right-hand-turn ordinance instead, and then put up signs saying, "No right-hand turn."

Note, it would not be sufficient simply to pass a right-hand turn ordinance. The left-hand-turn ordinance would still be in force until it was repealed. To pass a right-hand-turn ordinance and not repeal the other, would leave both in force. If the intent is that hereafter left-hand turns are permitted, and right-hand turns forbidden, the first ordinance must be repealed, and the second enacted. To repeat, if one ordinance is to take the place of another, two acts are necessary: There must be a repeal of the one and an enactment of the other.

Suppose that, in the case mentioned, this was not made clear. Suppose that on a certain day the new regulations should go into effect. Up till then left-hand turns had been forbidden and right-hand turns permitted, but now this was to be reversed. But the old signs are still up. They say plainly, "No left-hand turn." There has been no public announcement of the proposed change. The public knows nothing of the altered ordinance.

A man approaches the intersection. He sees the old familiar sign: "No left-hand turn." He swings to the right, and is apprehended. In astonishment he asks what wrong he has done. He is told that he has made a right-hand turn, which is forbidden. He protests, but it avails him nothing. He is taken to the police station, protesting all the way that he has done no wrong.

The judge hears his case. "Did you not know that you are not supposed to turn right at that corner?" he is asked. 'No, how could I?' he answers. "The law has always permitted a right-hand turn and it has not been repealed. There has been no announcement to that effect. And the sign is still at the corner, 'No left-hand turn.' When was the law changed?" 'Well, I really don't know, but I understand that it has been changed. I will fine you ten dollars,' the judge replies. "Your Honor, that would not be lawful. I appeal." The man would surely win on an appeal.

Let us apply these principles to the supposed change of the law of God. There has been no repeal of the Ten Commandments; there has been no enactment of any other law to take its place; and there has been no announcement by God or authorization of any contemplated change. In fact, quite the opposite is true; for Christ on earth lived out the law, expounded it, and proclaimed its binding quality.

How Christ Observed the Sabbath

For the proper observance of the Sabbath, we must go to the example of our Lord and Savior when He was here on earth. Christ is "Lord also of the Sabbath." Mark 2:28. "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." John 1:3. If "all things" were made by Christ, if the Sabbath "was made" (Mark 2:27), Christ made it. Being thus closely connected with it, He knows how it should be observed, and we may safely follow His example. He will not lead us astray.

How did Christ observe the day? "As his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read." Luke 4:16. Christ went to church on the Sabbath. This was no spasmodic or occasional attendance. It was His "custom" to do so.

He had a part in the service. He "stood up for to read." It was the practice in those days to invite one who was capable, to lead out in the service. Christ did not draw back when He was so invited. He stood up and read.

But Christ did more than go to church on the Sabbath. He went about doing good. He healed and helped wherever He could. Often upon coming out of the synagogue, He would accept an invitation to go to a home, as in the instance recorded in Luke 4:38, 39. On that occasion "he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house." Here He found one sick, "taken with a great fever. . . And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her."

At times this healing was done in the synagogue itself. On one occasion there was a man with a withered hand, and 'they watched ... whether he would heal him on the Sabbath day.' They did not have long to wait. To the man He said, "Stretch forth your hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other." Mark 3:1-5.

It was on this occasion that Christ asked a question which throws light on the question of true Sabbath keeping. The Pharisees were watching Him. He knew that they were ready to take "counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him." Verse 6. But He had a work to do. He must show what true Sabbath keeping means, though it result in losing His life. So "he said unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace." Verse 4.

We may rightly draw the conclusion from these incidents that Christ on the Sabbath went about doing good, that He healed and helped. He made the Sabbath a day of joy and happiness, of hope and cheer, rather than one of gloom and repression.

That Christ was a profound student both of Scripture and of nature, is evident from the respect which His knowledge commanded even at an early age. (Luke 2:41-52.) In His sermons and teachings He made frequent reference to nature and to the things of nature. Such knowledge could have come to Him only through constant study, reflection, and observation. Is it too much to believe that when His week's work as carpenter was done, He went out to commune with nature and nature's God, to reflect, meditate, study, and pray, and that the greater part of this was done on the Sabbath when He would have time and leisure for it? It is significant that "he found the place" for which He was looking in the book of Isaiah. (Luke 4:17.) He was using the synagogue copy of the Scriptures, but He was familiar enough with them to be able to find what He wanted. Not all can do this, even though they use their own Bible

and have it marked. I would not draw unwarranted conclusions from an incident such as this, but I believe that Christ was acquainted with the Scriptures in a very definite way. As He worked at His trade from day to day, the Sabbath was ordinarily the only time in which He could uninterruptedly do such study. It is therefore safe to assume that part of the Sabbath was used by the Lord to make Himself better informed in regard to the writings of old, and that He did such thorough work that He was more than ordinarily well read.

When we, therefore, sum up what we know concerning the manner in which Christ spent the Sabbath, we find that He went to church; that He preached and healed; that He took walks; that He studied, prayed, and meditated. If I were to venture an opinion as to which occupied the greater share of the time, I would not be on sure ground. The record, however, gives much prominence to His going about doing good and healing. In any event, Christ was not a recluse, keeping to Himself and withholding from the world His presence and His service. He loved to mingle with the people. He even accepted invitations on the Sabbath to dine with Pharisees where others were present, and He used these occasions to point out some of His most pertinent lessons for them and for all.

Christ's Teaching on the Law

Christ's opposition to the many burdens and restrictions which the Pharisees had placed upon the Sabbath caused some to think that He disregarded the day and that He thought lightly of the law, and had come to destroy it. Christ met these thoughts and suggestions with a definite statement in regard to His attitude toward the law. "Think not," He said, "that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Matthew 5:17, 18.

Some contend that the statement "the law or the prophets" in the above quotation often denotes the Old Testament. I agree with this. But when they further assert that it does not include the Ten Commandments, I must definitely disagree with them. Contrariwise, I believe that "the law" first of all has reference to the moral law of God, the Ten Commandments. Verse nineteen mentions the "commandments," and Christ immediately goes into a discussion of the commandments to which He refers. In verse twenty-one He quotes the commandment: "Thou shalt not kill." In verse twenty-seven, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." These surely belong to the law of God, and Jesus quotes them verbatim. To what else could Jesus refer when in verse nineteen He says, "Whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven?"

When Christ says, "Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (verse 18), He speaks of the moral law and of no other. Could it be possible that Christ would say that one jot or one tittle should not pass from the Jewish ritual or the Old Testament until heaven and earth pass away? Would that be true? "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." Luke 16:17. Will any claim that this means the Mosaic law of sacrifices which was to cease at the death of Christ? Only one who is in desperate need of an argument to bolster up his theory would attempt such perversion of the plain statement of Scripture.

When Christ states that He did not come to destroy the law; when He says that those who teach the law shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. When He says that it is easier for heaven and earth to pass than for one tittle of the law to fail, He had reference first of all to the law of God as contained in the Ten Commandments.

We cannot lightly brush these statements aside as of little importance. Christ was accused of breaking the Sabbath and destroying the law. He now announces His "creed." Foremost in this creed is the statement that He stands by the law, that He is not destroying it, that He reverences it highly. So far from attempting to annul it, He says "it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail."

If we apply this latter statement to the Sabbath commandment, we would certainly not come to the conclusion that it is an easy matter to change seven to one, as would have to be done if the first day is to be the Sabbath, rather than the seventh.

It would not be merely one word that needed changing. The whole commandment would need to be changed. The reason given in the commandment for keeping the Sabbath is that God worked six days and rested on the seventh. The statement is very definite: "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." Exodus 20:10. It would be meaningless to say:

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall thou labor, and do all thy work: but the first day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work. . . . for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the first day, and hallowed it."

That would be confusion confounded. No one would be able to see any reason for keeping the first day in the fact that God kept the seventh. To say that God worked six days and rested the seventh, and that we therefore ought to keep the first day, does not make sense. It would not be enough to change only a word of the commandment if we changed the observance from the seventh to the first day of the week. We would have to change many words, change the whole commandment. But if Christ says that it is easier for heaven and earth to pass than for one tittle of the law to fail, what shall we say of changing many titles and many words? It cannot be done, according to Christ's pronouncement.

The statement, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God," has not been given due emphasis. It does not say that the seventh day is the Sabbath of Jew or Gentile, bond or free, man or woman, but that it is the Sabbath of the Lord. If God were asked, "Which day, Lord, is Thy Sabbath: the first or the seventh day?" He would answer in the language of the commandment, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." And He might address the following command to the questioner: "In it thou shalt not do any work." This would be embarrassing to one who keeps the first day of the week. But in reality, does not this settle the question as to which day is the Sabbath? When God says, "The seventh day is the Sabbath," who dares contradict Him and say, "No, Lord, the

first day is the Sabbath”? In the language of man God might answer, “Do not think that the first day is My Sabbath; I the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord.’ I don’t want you to do any work in it. ‘Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy!

A Larger Question

The Sabbath question is larger than the mere keeping of a particular day. It is a question of obeying God or not obeying Him. It is a question of observing the law or violating it. And it concerns not the Sabbath commandment only. It concerns the whole law. “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” James 2: 10. Lest any should be in doubt as to which law is meant—the Ten Commandments, or the Levitical law—James adds, for He that said, Do no commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.” Verse 11.

This makes the breaking or treating lightly of one of the commandments a serious matter. Not one jot or one tittle of the law must be changed, Christ says. Did He know that the time would come when some would attempt to change it? May it be this which James had in mind when he says, “Who looks in the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed”? James 1:25. Not a forgetful hearer! What is there in the law that tells us not to forget. There is one commandment that begins with the word remember. Did James think of this when he said that we must not be forgetful hearers, but doers? The man that is a doer “shall be blessed in his deed.”

Some Christians object to James because he speaks so much of the law. After all, they say, we are not saved by the law, but by faith. To this we agree. Does faith, then, make the law of none effect? Let us ask Paul. He himself propounds the question and answers it: “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.” Romans 3:31. The Greek word here translated “establish” means “to place, to set, to cause to stand.” It is the same word that is used in Hebrews 10:9, where one law—the one dealing with “sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin”—is taken away, and where the other law—the one which Christ has in His heart, the Ten Commandments—is established. “He takes away the first, that he may establish the second.” Hebrews 10:6-9. Let those who believe that the moral law is taken away ponder this text. If the ten-commandment law is the law which is taken away, then there is only one other conclusion as to the law that is established: It must be the law of offerings. Do any wish to contend that Christ abolished the moral law, the Ten Commandments, and established the law of “sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin”? Yet, one is taken away; the other is established. There is only one answer to the question regarding which law was taken away and which was established. The law that was taken away was the Levitical law, and the one that was established was the moral law of God, the eternal, unchangeable transcript of God’s own character, the Ten Commandments.

Paul and John

Some Christians object to Paul. He speaks more of the law than even James. They wish a religion that is emasculated, one in which all that is stern and hard and unpleasant is taken away, and only that which is easy and pleasant and soft remains. They seem to forget that life is real, that Christianity is real, and that there is a cross as well as a crown. Such love to quote certain passages from John. He is the apostle of love. He does not deal with such unpleasant matters as duty and law. With him all is love. Let us accept their invitation and follow them to John and note what he says of love.

John was and is the apostle of love. That was his great theme. And rightly so, for God Himself is the God of love. He not merely loves—He is love. So let us find out from John what his conception of love is.

We ask, “John, you are known as the apostle of love just what is love?”

John answers, “This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.” I John 5:3.

“Why, John, we have been taught that keeping the commandments is a grievous and hard thing to do.”

“No, his commandments are not grievous.” Verse 3.

“We are perplexed, John, at this answer. You say that if we love God, we will keep His commandments. Now, we are not heathen. We are Christians. We know God. We love God, but we do not keep His commandments.”

“He that said, I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” I John 2:4.

“Why, John, this is almost worse than James and Paul. Do you really mean to say that if we love God, we must keep the commandments?”

“This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.’ ‘He that said he abides in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” 1 John 5:3; 24

“How did Christ walk? Did He keep the commandments?”

“Yes, Christ says, ‘I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.’ John 15: 10. Is it not enough to love God and the children of God, without having to keep the law?”

“There is no way that we can know that we love God or the children of God without keeping the commandments. We know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.” I John 5:2.

“If we have God and His Spirit dwelling in the heart, do we need to keep the commandments?” “God has promised to dwell in the heart of the man who keeps the law. He that keeps his commandments dwells in him, and he in him.” 1 John 3:24.

“Are we, then, to understand that if we profess to love God, we must keep the commandments?” “Yes, there is no other way. Christ Himself says, ‘If you love me, keep my commandments.’ John 14:15.

These texts bring vividly to mind that the love of God and the commandments of God are closely united. They do not give the least hint that the commandments are abrogated. John, the apostle of love, is also the apostle of the law. When John says that “this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments,” and “he that said, I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him,” there does not seem to be much to say in reply. I John 5:3; 2:4. If a man should say this to us, we might

become offended, for the words are very plain and do not admit of more than one meaning. But when God speaks we keep silent. We admit our shortcomings, and ask God for forgiveness and for strength to do what we ought. This is true Christianity.

So far we have not found anything in the New Testament that would give us the idea that we might play fast and loose with God's law. On the contrary, we have found that the test of our love for God is found in our attitude toward the law. If we love God, we shall keep the commandments.

The law is an expression of God's will. It defines sin and warns against it. For this we should be thankful. We would not have known sin, but through the law. We would not have known that it is sin to covet, any more than Paul knew, "except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." Romans 7:7. As we should be thankful to a faithful guide who points out to us the danger of the way, so we should be thankful to the law for its insistence on righteousness and holy living. It may be seriously questioned whether one who does not love the law loves the Lord of the law. He may be in ignorance of the law, but when light comes he who loves God gladly accepts it.

Why Abrogate the Law?

The Sabbath stands or falls with the law. If the law is still in force, the Sabbath is in force. If the law is done away, then the Sabbath is done away. The Sabbath is an integral part of the law, and its future is bound up with it. What happens to one happens to the other.

What reason could there ever be in heaven or in earth for the abrogation of the law? It condemns sin. Is not this needed? I am at a loss to understand how any person could wish to have a law abolished that is as faithful to point out sin as is the moral law. As a physician diagnoses a case, so the law diagnoses our case. It finds the disease spot and thus makes possible the application of a remedy.

It may be conceived that a person who is sick does not wish to find out what ails him; but if so, it must be because he does not wish to get well, or else there is something wrong with his mental processes. No, the person who is sick and wishes to get well must first of all have a faithful and thorough examination. His condition must be understood by the physician, his life history must be gone into. The physician may ask embarrassing questions; but if the patient wishes to be helped, he will tell the truth. So the physician probes deep. All contributing factors are weighed; all inherited and cultivated tendencies are examined. At last the diagnosis is complete. The physician gives his verdict. The patient knows what is wrong with him. He must now decide for himself whether he will follow the advice or ignore it. The doctor has done his part. The patient must take the next step.

This matter of diagnosis is the work of the law in cooperation with the Spirit. The law points out the sin; the Spirit says, "Thou art the man." The law points out general conditions and principles; the Spirit makes individual application. The law defines sin; the Spirit convinces of it. We must therefore be careful not to do despite to the Spirit and neglect His warnings. We do so only, at the peril of our souls.

Why, then, should any object to the law? It seems beyond comprehension that a person, and especially a Christian, should believe and teach that the law is no more in force. Do such mean to say that the commandment against stealing is abrogated? That cannot be. Do they mean to say that men henceforth may kill with impunity? They surely cannot mean that. Then what do they mean? Each commandment taken by itself is still in force, but the law when considered as a whole is repealed! Why such inconsistency?

There is only one consistent position. If the law stands, the Sabbath stands. The only way to avoid the Sabbath obligation is to do away with the whole law. This is rather drastic treatment, but some perform the necessary mental gymnastics. They abolish the whole law, and then re-enact the nine commandments, leaving out the objectionable one. They fail to understand that their attitude toward one commandment determines their attitude toward all. They are in reality at war with God and with His law, though they may not so intend it.

There is nothing clearer in the Bible than that God's law is eternal in its nature, and that it is easier for heaven and earth to pass than for one jot or one tittle of the law to fail. Is it not, therefore, strange that men should still believe that the law is of a temporary nature and can be broken without breaking fellowship with God?

The Law in the Judgment

Consider the law as the standard in the judgment. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." 2 Corinthians 5:10. Not only men, but also "the angels which kept not their first estate are reserved 'unto the judgment of the great day.'" Jude 6. At that time "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Ecclesiastes 12:14.

I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Revelation 20:12.

The books that are opened contain a record of each person's life. Clearly delineated is every sin, every wrong word and action. Those who have an advocate will survive and stand justified, but those who have none will perish. "As many as have sinned without [a knowledge of] law, shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law." Romans 2:12. At that time "not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." Verse 13.

It is sin that is dealt with in the judgment. It is because of sin that men perish. It is because they have been saved from sin that God will take them to Himself. Sin is what has caused and is causing all the misery that is in the world. Before there can be lasting peace or happiness in God's universe, sin must be exterminated, root and branch.

But what is sin? Is there a guide by which we may know what is sin and what is not? The answer is that there is such a guide. God has given an unerring rule, one that points out and defines sin in understandable language. That rule is the Ten Commandments.

We do not claim to know more than Paul or John. Paul confessed that he “had not known sin, but by the law.” Romans 7:7. Very distinctly John says that “all unrighteousness is sin,” and that “sin is the transgression of the law.” I John 5:17; 3:4. When, therefore, Christ saves us from sin, He saves us from transgressing the law. When He dies for sin He dies because we have transgressed the law. When He makes atonement He makes atonement for a broken law. No wonder Paul exclaims, “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid.” Romans 6:1,2. With the definition of sin which the Bible gives us, this text reads, “Shall we continue transgressing the law, that grace may abound? God forbid!” Yet this very thing is what some religionists teach! Christ died because we had sinned. He gave His life because we had broken the law. He shed His blood on Calvary that we might be freed from sin. Shall we then continue to do the very thing that drove the nails through the Master's hand? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound; shall we continue breaking the law that we may be forgiven? God forbid! Such teaching is not from above.

Why should any have ought against the law? Do they not “know that the law is spiritual,” that “the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good”? Romans 7:14,12. Do they not know that the law is “the perfect law of liberty,” and that they should “fulfil the royal law according to the scripture”; that they should so speak “and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty”? James 1:25; 2:8,12. Do they not know that Christ has the law in His heart, and that if they accept Christ, they also accept the law? (Psalm 40:8.) Do they not know that as Christians they ought “to walk, even as he walked,” and that He said, I have kept my Father's commandments”? I John 2:6; John 15:10. Do they not know that if they follow His example, they will keep the Sabbath according to the commandment? When the seventh day came, “as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day.” Luke 4:16. Do they not know that “the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath,” and that if they accept Him in other things, they must accept Him as the “Lord also of the Sabbath”? Mark 2:28. Christ and the law are inseparable. He is its author; He made it; He proclaimed it. Because of its transgression, He died. To Him it is very precious. It has cost Him much.

The Law and the Atonement

I have before referred to the fact that the law-and therefore the Sabbath as part of the law-was and is the ground of the atonement. For more than a thousand years the two tables of stone in the ark in the sanctuary on earth formed the center of the service on the great day of the year when the high priest went into the most holy to make atonement for Israel. This atonement was symbolic of a higher atonement to be made when the Lamb of God was to give Himself a ransom for the race. There was, of course, no real atonement for Israel in any of their sacrificial services. Whatever virtue there was in them was in view of a Calvary to come. The earthly was only a figure of the heavenly.

It was the breaking of “any of the commandments of the Lord” that set in motion the atoning sin offerings of old. (Leviticus 4:2,13,22,27.) It was the ten-commandment law that was the ground of the atonement. We now ask, Was the law in the sanctuary on earth a copy of the law in heaven above? To this there is only one answer: God commanded Moses to be sure that he made all things according to the pattern shown him. (Exodus 25:40; 26:30; 27:8.) When it came to the Ten Commandments, God did not permit Moses either to speak or to write them. He wanted to do that Himself. And so God spoke the Ten Commandments directly to the people, and afterward wrote them with His own finger on two tables of stone. (Exodus 20: 1; 24:12; 31:18.) Coming thus directly from heaven, the commandments are just as God would have them. The fact that they were written in solid stone is symbolic of their enduring and unchangeable character.

This settles the question of the Sabbath. The law says that “the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord.” God Himself announced this. He Himself wrote the commandment on two tables of stone. And that God meant what He said is abundantly testified to by the fact that Sabbath breaking was punished severely. (Numbers 15:32-36.) But if Christ made atonement for the violation of law, then the breaking of the fourth commandment is one of the transgressions for which Christ paid the penalty. This makes the transgression of the fourth commandment a most serious matter.

Making a personal application of this, it becomes necessary for each to repent of his transgression in this respect and violate the Sabbath no more. Anything less than this makes of no effect, as far as the individual is concerned, all the agony, blood, and tears which salvation has cost.

23. Sunday In The New Testament

SO FAR in our discussion we have found nothing that indicates that Christ has changed the Ten Commandments, or abolished or destroyed them. On the contrary, we have found that He distinctly enforces them and says that it is easier for heaven and earth to pass than for one jot or one tittle of the law to fail. But now the question arises, Is there nothing in the New Testament concerning the first day of the week? Most Christians observe that day. There must surely be some statements in the New Testament concerning Sunday.

Six Texts

In the New Testament there are eight texts that mention the first day. These are as follows: Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2,9; Luke 24:1; John 20:19; Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:2. Six of these texts refer to the same day, the day of the resurrection. Of the other two, one refers to a meeting held by Paul, and the other refers to a collection. We shall now consider these texts in detail.

The first text reads, "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre." Matthew 28:1. It is to be noted that Matthew here differentiates between the Sabbath and the first day of the week. The Sabbath is one day, the first day of the week is another. Matthew could just as well have said, When the old Jewish Sabbath was past and the new first day Sabbath had come. But he does not say this. Although he wrote many years after the crucifixion he still calls the seventh day the Sabbath, and Sunday the first day. There is no hint given here that there is any change in the Sabbath day.

The second and third texts read, "When the Sabbath was past.... very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun." Mark 16:1,2. The ninth verse states, "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils." These two texts refer to the same day mentioned by Matthew. Note that Mark also makes a distinction between the Sabbath and the first day of the week. He says, "When the Sabbath was past. . . . very early in the morning the first day of the week." Mark wrote some thirty years after the resurrection. He could easily have put in a word concerning the new Sabbath had there been a new Sabbath. And he ought to have so done if it were God's intention to institute a new day. But Mark says nothing of a new Sabbath. The reason is that he knew of no change.

The fourth text is Luke 24:1. It mentions the same day as the others: "Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them." The preceding verses throw a little light on the circumstances which surround this visit of the women to the tomb. Christ had been crucified on the preparation day, Friday, and "the Sabbath drew on." Luke 23:54. After they had seen where Christ was laid, "they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment." Verse 56. Then follows, "Now upon the first day of the week." Luke 24: 1. The situation is the same as in the other cases: The Sabbath was "past" when the first day of the week came. In this case we are definitely told that this Sabbath was "according to the commandment." Luke wrote more than twenty years after the resurrection.

The fifth text is John 20: 1. It reads, "The first day of the week comes Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and sees the stone taken away from the sepulchre." This is substantially the same record that Luke gives. Christ was crucified on the preparation day, and "that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was an high day,)" the Jews "besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away." John 19:31. Again we have the Sabbath mentioned as coming before the first day of the week. John wrote about the close of the first century, nearly seventy years after the resurrection. If God intended to confer any sacredness on the first day of the week, would it not have been fitting for John to call Sunday the Sabbath, rather than to say that the seventh day is the Sabbath, and merely refer to Sunday as the first day of the week?

The sixth text is found in John 20:19. "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you." This was not Christ's first appearance after His resurrection. He had previously "appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country." Mark 16:12. These two had hurriedly returned to Jerusalem to tell the others what they had experienced. "And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them." Verse 13. When Christ suddenly appeared to them, He "upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen." Verse 14.

Some contend that the disciples were gathered that evening to celebrate the resurrection. But in the face of this testimony how can any believe this? The fact as stated is that "they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen." For this Christ "upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart." Nor were they together to celebrate the Lord's supper. They were in that room because they lived there, and for fear of the Jews." And it was for this reason that "the doors were shut." John 20:19. They were having an evening meal, and when Christ came "they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them." Like 24:42,43. This can hardly be called a communion service or a celebration of the resurrection. Neither fish nor honey is used in communion.

These texts exhaust the statements concerning the day of the resurrection. Two others remain.

Two Texts

The first of these texts is Acts 20:7: "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight." Here is a meeting, and the first-and only-meeting specifically recorded in the New Testament as being held on the first day of the week. The disciples were together "to break bread." Paul preached, and 11 continued his speech until midnight." We do not know what time the meeting began, but we know that it lasted till after midnight. "There were many lights in the upper chamber." A young man was sitting in the window, "and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead." Acts 20:9. Paul went down and restored him to life, after which they brake bread "and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed." Verse 11.

Commentators are not agreed which evening this meeting was held. The Biblical day, which the Jews followed, began at sunset. The first day of the week would therefore begin at sunset Saturday evening. When it says that this meeting was held the first day of the week, the question arises as to whether by this is meant the evening of Saturday or of Sunday. If Sunday evening is meant, and the meeting was held after sunset, then, according to Bible reckoning, it was really held the second day of the week, and as they had a long meeting, they did not break bread until Monday morning, sometime after midnight. As far as we can learn from the record, it was about midnight when the young man fell down. It was after this that they brake bread and continued until morning. The breaking of the bread was therefore on Monday and not on Sunday; that is, if the meeting was held Sunday evening, as some believe.

If the other view is taken-and this we believe is the more probable-then the meeting was held on what we would now call Saturday night, beginning after sunset. Paul had been in Troas seven days. (Acts 20:6.) He was on his way to Jerusalem, but tarried at Troas to visit the church and to meet his companions who had gone before him and were waiting for him. After the Sabbath he wanted to resume his journey. But before leaving, he meets once more with the church. It is a farewell meeting, and he is "ready to depart on the morrow." "In this case the meeting was held on the first day of the week as the text says. The next day, Sunday, Paul starts on his journey, walking nineteen miles to Assos, where he took ship, "for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot." Verse 13.

Paul had the same custom as Christ. He went to church on the Sabbath day. (Luke 4:16; Acts 17:2; 13:14; 16:13.) But on the first day of the week he set off on a long journey afoot. Apparently he did not consider the day different from the other working days. Had Paul wished to convey the idea that he was instituting a new Sabbath, he should have stayed over and conducted a meeting Sunday forenoon, and published the fact far and near, instead of starting on a long journey that day as though it was a common, ordinary day. That Paul did as is here recorded adds the weight of his testimony to that of the writers of the Gospels that the first day of the week is only a common work day, and not a Sabbath in any sense.

The last text in which the first day of the week is mentioned is I Corinthians 16:1 "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." Alford, in his New Testament for English Readers, says of the translation, "Literally, let each of you lay up at home whatsoever he may by prosperity have acquired." The Cambridge Bible says, "Note that the contribution is not paid into a common fund, but laid by at home." The Greek reading is clear. It is not a public collection. Each is to lay by him-that is, at home whatever he may have. So the Vulgate translates it, and also the German by Luther, several French translations, the Italian of Diodati, the Spanish, and others.

These are all the texts in the New Testament that mention the first day of the week. None of them speak of the day as holy; none of them call it the Sabbath; none of them command its observance; none of them say that Sunday has taken the place of the seventh-day Sabbath.

Why Mention It?

The question may arise in the minds of some, Why is the first day of the week mentioned in the New Testament? As God knew that many would begin to observe Sunday, would it not have been better under the circumstances to ignore the day and not to mention it at all? Why mention the first day when it might only cause confusion?

This question deserves consideration. God must have had good reasons for mentioning the first day of the week. One reason would be that He wanted to make it clear to all that the first day is not the Sabbath, that it is only a common working day, and thus He forestalled any "argument from silence" that might be propounded. Also, by making a contrast between the two days, calling one day the Sabbath, He would make clear His own position in the matter.

It will be remembered that the first six times the first day is mentioned in the New Testament it is distinctively declared that the first day follows the Sabbath, and hence is not the Sabbath. The Sabbath "according to the commandment" (Luke 23:56) is said to follow the preparation day (John 19:31), and to come before the first day of the week. (Mark 16: 1, 2.) The women who followed Christ rested on the Sabbath, and 11 when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him." Mark 16: 1. When the disciples were together in the evening, to make sure that no one should think it was a meeting to celebrate the resurrection or the Lord's supper, it is stated that they were there for fear of the Jews; that the doors were shut. That they did not believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. That they were full of doubt and unbelief; that Jesus rebuked them for this; and that they ate fish and honeycomb, and were not celebrating the Lord's supper. (John 20:9; Mark 16:13, 14; Luke 24:42, 43.)

These texts all give evidence of having been put there for the specific purpose of telling us that the first day of the week is not the Sabbath, and the seventh day of the week is.

The other two texts bring the same testimony. Paul holds a meeting Saturday night as he is about to begin a long journey. The meeting is recorded to tell us of a miracle which Paul performed that night, but the author takes occasion to inform us that the next day, Sunday, Paul walks nineteen miles on his journey, a thing he would not have done on the Sabbath. (Acts 20:6-12.)

The last text, I Corinthians 16:2, tells us, On the first day of the week, "every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." This was to be done "at home," as was noted before. Hence, no public meeting is signified. Moreover, each was to lay by "as God hath prospered him." This would necessitate going over the records of the week, so that each would know how much he had prospered and could lay by accordingly. Many of the people were traders, and only by examining their accounts could they know their financial standing. This work was not to be done on the Sabbath, but they were to wait until the first day of the week. On that day they could do their bookkeeping and balance their accounts. This is what the text says.

God could have omitted all record of the first day of the week had He so desired. But that would not have been best. God chose to do it this way, the best of all possible ways. As God in the beginning began His work on the first day of the week, worked six days, and rested the seventh, so in the new creation Christ finishes His work, rests the seventh day, and rises the first day of the week to begin His new work of redemption. In the beginning the first day was not made the Sabbath because God began His work that day any more than the first day was made the Sabbath in the New Testament because Christ began His work that day. The two accounts correspond. And in each it is made very plain, not only which day is the Sabbath, but also which day is not the Sabbath. God Himself could not make it plainer.

Sabbath in the New Testament

It should be noted that although I have mentioned every text in which the first day of the week occurs, I have by no means mentioned every text in which the Sabbath is discussed. Eight times the first day is mentioned in the New Testament. The Sabbath is mentioned more than sixty times. Each of these texts is a mighty argument in favor of the perpetuity of the law and of the Sabbath.

In concluding our study of the Sabbath in the New Testament dispensation, I would call attention to the arguments which the writer of Hebrews uses in presenting the matter. They are recorded in the third and fourth chapters of his book.

Several times God tested His people, Israel, and each time it was on the Sabbath question. The record of these tests is found in the twentieth chapter of Ezekiel, and as it is to these experiences that the writer of Hebrews calls attention, we shall now consider them.

In this chapter God is recalling His experience with Israel in bringing them out of Egypt into the Promised Land. Certain of the elders of Israel had come to ask counsel of the Lord. The Lord refused to be inquired of by them, and told Ezekiel to recount to them His experience with their fathers. (Ezekiel 20:1-4.)

When God chose Israel in Egypt, intending to take them to the land flowing with milk and honey, He asked them to cast aside their idols and not to defile themselves. "But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: ... then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt." Verse 8. God did not do this, however, that His name "should not be polluted before the heathen." Verse 9.

Israel in the Wilderness

God brought Israel out of Egypt into the wilderness. There was proclaimed to them His law, His statutes, and His judgments. "Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." Verse 12. But as they had rebelled in Egypt, so they rebelled in the wilderness. "They walked not in my statutes, . . . and my Sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them." Verse 13.

But God took mercy upon them and did not consume them. However, He decided that though He would not consume them, neither would He take them into the Promised Land. They had been obstinate. They had been faithless. So God said, I will "not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands; because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my Sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols." Verses 15,16.

Note the reason why Israel was not permitted to enter the Promised Land: "They despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my Sabbaths."

As a result of their disobedience the fathers died in the wilderness. The journey that could have been finished in a few months now took forty years. "Your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness," God said, "and your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness." Numbers 14:32, 33.

After the fathers were all dead, God said to the children: "Walk you not in the statutes of your fathers.... Walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God." Ezekiel 20:18-20.

The Children Rebelled

But "the children rebelled against me." "They polluted my Sabbaths," as the fathers had done. Verse 21. "Then I [God] said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness." But God again showed them mercy, not for their sake, but for His own "name's sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight He brought them forth." Verse 22. God, however, put this judgment upon them: I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries; because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my Sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols." Ezekiel 20:23, 24. He also stated, I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: . . . and they shall not enter into the land of Israel." Verse 38.

It is evident from the foregoing that God had great difficulty with Israel in the wilderness, both with the fathers and with the children. They did not walk in His statutes and judgments, and they polluted His Sabbaths. For this reason God did not take the fathers into the Promised Land. They died in the wilderness. When He admonished the children they did not do any better than the fathers. They also rebelled against Him, did not do His will, but despised His statutes and judgments, and polluted His Sabbaths. So God said that He would do to them as He had done to the fathers. All the rebels He would "purge out," and "they shall not enter into the land of Israel." Verse 38. The rebels were those who despised God's judgment and polluted His Sabbaths. (Verses 13, 21.)

The writer of Hebrews uses these experiences to point a lesson. "Harden not your hearts," he says, "as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Hebrews 3:8-12.

He then asks the question, and also answers it: "With whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Verses 17-19.

The Lesson

Then comes the lesson. “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” Hebrews 4:1,2.

The author of Hebrews then brings in the subject of Sabbath keeping. For he spoke in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.” Verse 4. There is no question here as to which day is spoken of. It is “the seventh day” Sabbath. Israel had polluted it, and for this reason they were not permitted to enter Canaan. We are now about to enter the heavenly Canaan. “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”

God did not cast away all Israel. He purged out the rebels who would not do God's will, but polluted His Sabbaths. As He had given the children a chance after the fathers failed, so He gave their children another chance. The children's children were given their choice. “Seeing therefore it remains that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: again, he limits a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus [“Joshua,” margin] had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.” Verses 6-8.

“There remains therefore a rest to the people of God.--Verse 9. The word rest is the Greek sabbatismos, meaning “Sabbath rest,” as the Revised Version also translates it. The King James Version has in the margin, “Keeping of a Sabbath.” Israel failed to observe the Sabbath. They were rejected. The Sabbath still remains for the people of God. Israel failed. We are to be careful lest we also fail.

“He that is entered into his rest, he also bath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.” Verse 10. It has just been noted that the word rest in verse nine means Sabbath rest. In the other verses in the chapter in which the word rest occurs, it is a different word in the Greek, katapausis, that simply means a place of rest and does not give the idea of Sabbath rest. It may be profitable to study this a little further.

The Rest of God

Rest as used in the book of Hebrews, except in chapter four, verse nine, is that rest into which the believer enters when he gives up his own struggling and accepts Christ as his Savior. The entering of Israel into Canaan was a symbol of this. Israel had been in the wilderness forty years. Now God promised to bring them into the land that flowed with milk and honey. It can easily be believed that as they wandered year after year in the desert, the one thing they longed for was to get into the Promised Land. They had no home, no place of rest, nothing they could call their own. All the old men died. Hardly any were left who were grown up when Israel left Egypt. Would they ever get to Canaan? Would they ever get to a place where they were sure they could stay a few years and again have real homes? Their longings, their prayers, were all for a place of rest.

God used this longing to point them to something higher. The real rest for the people of God was something higher and better than Canaan. There was a heavenly Canaan, where the deep longings of the soul would find ultimate satisfaction. In the world they might have tribulation even after they entered the Promised Land. But there was a country of pure delight, there was a city whose builder and maker is God. That would be their inheritance if they were accounted worthy. That was the real rest of which everything earthly was only a shadow.

“There remains therefore a rest to the people of God.” This rest had been proclaimed to Israel of old. Abraham knew of it. Moses had announced it, as had also Joshua and David. But the rest had not been appropriated. It still remained. True, Israel had entered Palestine, but they had not found the true rest. For this reason God made another call “in David,” saying, “To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus [“Joshua,” margin] had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.” Hebrews 4:7, 8. Joshua had brought them into the Promised Land, but that was not the true rest. The true rest is a personal experience, which might perhaps best be illustrated by simply calling it conversion. Israel entered Canaan, but they were not converted. And so God issued call after call, saying, “To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” Thus they were given “another day” of grace.

But even then they did not appropriate to themselves the rest of God. That rest still remains. The call is still open. We are given another day to turn to God. Let us be careful lest we reject it.

The rest into which the soul enters who gives himself to God, is better and sweeter than even the rest that came to Israel after their forty years of wandering. The sinner struggles and labors. He is at war with God, with himself, often with his fellow men. His conscience accuses him, his shortcomings plague him, he is unable to do what he wants. He is in misery and cries out in despair, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Romans 7:24. Then suddenly peace comes to his soul. The battle is over. He surrenders. Peace, wonderful peace, is his. There are no more fighting within or without; God has complete control. He has found the true rest; he has found God.

Of this rest the Sabbath is symbolic. “He that is entered into his rest”—he that is converted and has peace with God he also hath ceased from his own works.” Note, “ceased from his own works, as God did from his.” Hebrews 4: 10. Paraphrasing, we would read, “He that has become a Christian has ceased from his own works, and rests as God rested.” How did God rest? “God did rest the seventh day from all his works.” Verse 4. Paraphrasing again, we may say, “He that has become a Christian has ceased from all his own works and rests on the seventh day, as God did.” There remains “the keeping of the Sabbath” to the people of God.

A Bit of Heaven

The Sabbath is a little bit of heaven left on earth. It hails from the time when God was with His people in Eden. It is a day when God specially meets with His own. It is symbolic of the rest that shall be His people's in the world to come. It is a holy day made for a holy people. It is a sign of sanctification. In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation God calls His own aside, meets with them, and blesses them. In creation it was the sign of a finished work, a sign of perfection. It is still the sign of the sanctification of the soul, the sign that God is our God. The call to enter into this rest, and all it signifies, has been given from generation to generation; but it has not as yet been fully appropriated. It still sounds: "To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

How vital is the admonition: "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." Hebrews 4: 11. We have studied the history of Israel and why they did not enter into the Promised Land. They did not serve God. They were careless of - the Sabbath. They polluted it. God was wroth with them, and they were not permitted to enter the land. Now, let us labor to enter into that rest. Let us be careful lest we fall after the same manner of unbelief-of disobedience, as the Greek has it.

The lesson of the fourth chapter of Hebrews should not be lost upon us. I do not wish to place undue emphasis upon the Sabbath, but when it becomes apparent that when Israel failed to honor God's day God sharply rebuked them; that they were not permitted to enter Canaan because of disobedience. That one of the chief matters in which they failed was the observance of the Sabbath of the Lord; that the writer of Hebrews recounts all this that we may not fall after the same example of unbelief. And that he specifically mentions the seventh day on which God rested, coupling it with the rest that remains to the people of God, I do not believe I would be doing my duty if I did not give the trumpet a certain sound.

I say, therefore, that God expects His people today to profit by the history and experience of His people in the past. He who today deliberately and knowingly breaks any of the commandments of God is guilty before God, as was Israel of old. They entered not in because of disobedience. Let us see to it that we do not follow their example.

24. Parables Of The Kingdom - A

THERE are some things which concern religion that are not easily defined. Who, for instance, can define God, or the Holy Spirit, or heaven, or the atonement, or any one of many other things of which we have a more or less clear conception, but which nevertheless are not easily understood?

Christ came to make plain the way of salvation, but He had difficulty putting into human language all that He wanted to say. Again and again He had to fall back on parables to explain His meaning. There was, to illustrate, the question of the kingdom of heaven. Christ preached it, and the disciples preached it. They proclaimed that it was nigh at hand. But what was the kingdom? The people wanted to know, and Jesus wanted them to know. But there was no way in which Jesus could define it in a few words so that it would be understood. It embraced so many things that the best Jesus could do was to present to them a series of parables dealing with the subject of the kingdom, and thus illustrate what it is like.

The kingdom of heaven, Jesus said, is like a sower who went forth to sow. It is like a grain of mustard seed. It is like leaven. It is like a treasure hid in a field. It is like a pearl of great price. It is like a net. It is like a king. The kingdom of heaven is like these, and like a great many other things. It is so all-embracing that it cannot be likened to one or two or three things. For a full understanding of what the kingdom is like, we need to consider not only one or two of the parables but all that deal with the subject. Only thus can we get a clear conception of what Jesus meant. And even then our limited comprehension may not fathom all.

In the thirteenth chapter of the gospel according to Matthew there are several parables dealing with the kingdom. They are of supreme and primary importance. Let us study them.

The Parable of the Sower

"He spoke many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Matthew 13:3-9.

When Jesus had spoken this parable to the multitude, the disciples desired to know the meaning of it. This Jesus proceeded to give. "Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one hears the word of the kingdom, and understands it not, then comes the wicked one, and catches away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that hears the word, and anon with joy receives it. Yet hath he not root in himself, but endures for a while: for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that hears the word, and understands it; which also bears fruit, and brings forth, some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty." Verses 18-23.

We often fail to get the good we should from the spoken or written word, because we apply to others that which we should apply to ourselves. As the explanation in these verses was given to the disciples rather than to the multitude, it may be well for us to make personal application.

The Wayside

"When any one hears the word of the kingdom, and understands it not." Many people hear the Word but do not understand it. For this there are various reasons. Some of them we shall consider.

One reason people do not understand the Word is that it is not always made plain to them. We blame the people for not understanding the Word, but in some cases the people do not understand because the teacher himself does not understand, and hence cannot explain. This is lamentable-preachers attempting to explain that which they do not understand to people who do not understand!

I would not dare to say that some teachers do not always understand if Jesus Himself had not first said it. At one time there came to Jesus from Jerusalem some scribes and Pharisees who wanted to know why His disciples transgressed the tradition of the elders. (Matthew 15:1,2.) These traditions had to do with washing the hands in ceremonial washing, not for cleansing purposes. The Jews were very tenacious of these traditions, and even placed them before the law of God.

Jesus promptly pointed out their mistake, challenging them, "Why do you also transgress the commandments of God by your traditions?" He then showed them wherein they had failed, in that they had held their own tradition above the commandments of God. "Thus," He said, "have you made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. You hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draws nigh unto me with their mouth, and honors me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." Matthew 15:6-8. These were hard words for the scribes and Pharisees, who were the teachers of the people. Christ accused them of making of none effect the commandments of God. Then He added the fearful words: In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Verse 9. I can think of nothing worse than vain worship. If men do not worship God at all, they have no ground for hope. But when men think they are worshiping God, when they go to divine service regularly and are outwardly religious, and then are told that they worship in vain, it must be a hard blow. What shall we say of the teachers who ought to know better, and yet are leading the people in vain worship? Never had Christ spoken more serious words to the scribes and the Pharisees. It challenged their position as leaders, and virtually told them that they were leading the people astray-a terrible indictment.

Blind Leaders of the Blind

When the disciples heard this they were perplexed, and as they heard the Pharisees discussing among themselves and learned how they had reacted to Christ's indictment, they came to Jesus and said, "Know thou that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?" Verse 12.

Jesus well knew the effect which His words had had on the Pharisees, but instead of retracting them He added, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." Verses 13, 14.

"Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind." Blind leaders leading blind people! What will be the result of such? "Both shall fall into the ditch."

It is not only in the time of Christ that there were blind leaders. At that time some were holding tradition in higher esteem than the commandments of God. There are leaders today who do the same. They do not hold the commandments of God in high regard; they do not speak well of them. Christ called such "blind leaders of the blind," and said that they were worshiping Him in vain. Mark, in recording the same incident, adds these words: "Full well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition." Mark 7:9. We are in as great danger today from those who prefer tradition to the commandments of God as were the people of old. It is well for us to be on the watch lest we be led astray and worship God in vain.

How can the people be expected to see or to understand when those who lead them are blind? How can the blind lead the blind? Will not both fall into the ditch? We must, therefore, not always blame the people for their lack of understanding. In some cases the responsibility rests upon the leaders. Some of them are not giving the trumpet a certain sound. Of this Paul says: "Even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sound, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise you, except you utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for you shall speak into the air." I Corinthians 14:7-9.

Although this refers to speaking with tongues, the principle is of general application. If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" How true that is. If the trumpeter blow a retreat and an advance at the same time, or if he blow merely a jumble of sounds, who can understand? So the Word to be understood must be interpreted clearly and definitely; there must be no uncertainty about what is said or its meaning; there must be nothing of human tradition in it; there must be no tampering with the law.

The People also Responsible

"When any one hears the word of the kingdom, and understands it not, then comes the wicked one, and catches away that which was sown in his heart." Matthew 13: 19. Though the leaders are often responsible for people not understanding, the people themselves are not without blame.

It is of little use that the truth be spoken clearly and fearlessly if the people fail to hear or to heed. Satan uses many means, some of them almost ridiculously simple, to hinder people from hearing or understanding. If he cannot keep men from attending

divine service, he can put them to sleep after they get there. The one means is as effective as the other. In neither case do they hear or understand the Word.

A man may be attending divine service, but his mind may be occupied with problems of the farm. A woman may be sitting in the church, but her mind may be in her kitchen. One is farming or trading while apparently listening to a sermon; another is baking a pie at the same time. It would be interesting to know what is passing through the minds of some people attending religious worship; it would make absorbing reading.

Without attention there can be no understanding. In the parable Jesus says that the evil one "catches away that which was sown in his heart." Matthew 13:19. Is it possible that God's people come together on the Sabbath, and that the evil one is present to catch away the word, so that they are not getting from the preaching all that they should?

A pessimist has observed that in the ordinary congregation a few are asleep, many more are half asleep, most of the others have their minds on something else than the sermon, about one tenth are listening to the speaker, and half of these are disagreeing with him. This is doubtless an exaggeration, but we are confident that too few are getting out of the sermon what they should. The wicked one catches away the Word as it is being sown.

It is strange how little it takes to draw attention from the Word. Someone walks down the aisle, a child moves, a book drops to the floor, a new hat appears—anything and everything serves the purpose of diverting attention from the Word. The preacher makes a grammatical mistake; he mispronounces a word; he runs three minutes over the allotted time. The baritone fails to negotiate a difficult passage or the bass does not come out strong enough on the low note. Perhaps it is warm, or cold, and the janitor has not attended to his work. These occupy the mind and attention of the hearers. In the meantime the wicked one catches away the Word.

After the service is over, the work of catching away the Word still goes on. Men buy and sell, trade horses, make profound observations concerning the weather, congratulate the pastor on his good sermon, take mental notes of a number of things, and then go home to eat and take a nap.

Happy is the preacher who escapes with such mental criticism as has been made in the church during the progress of the sermon. Unfortunately, some parishioners think that others should have the benefit of their deep thinking; so at the dinner table the sermon is gone over in detail with such contributions as others feel called upon to make. The preacher should be present to hear this, for at times things are said which might be helpful to him. But he is not there, and the conversation goes on. I wonder, however, whether this results in a deeper respect for the Word. How are the children affected by the criticism? I am persuaded that adverse discussion of the Sabbath sermon at dinner tables is not wholesome or profitable, and that it would be much better to refrain from criticism. To be asleep or to be half asleep in the church, to criticize the sermon at the dinner table, and then to lie down to sleep, leaves much to be desired as ideal Sabbath occupation.

What can be done to remedy matters? What can be done to stop evil criticism which catches away the force of the Word and makes it of none effect? Only God can help a man who does such. He needs to go on his knees before God and confess his sin. There is no other remedy.

Sleeping in Church

What can be done to keep people awake in church? Some may consider this a small matter and believe that not much harm is done by sleeping. Such should revise their thinking.

Not only is harm done, but much harm is done. And the blame is not all the preacher's. Some think that it is his work to keep people awake. But this contention cannot be defended. Even Paul could not keep the young man awake who fell down from the window while he was preaching. In a certain meeting this incident was related to show what might happen to people who go to sleep in church. The rejoinder was that possibly it was recorded to show the effect that long sermons have.

Only he who has struggled with sleep during a meeting realizes the battle that must be fought to keep awake. A sermon is a failure to the extent that people are not alert. The best sermon cannot help a man who is asleep. If it were only understood and appreciated that it is the wicked one who is attempting to put men to sleep, to chloroform them as it were, sleeping in church would become of more general concern. It should be considered an evil habit to overcome, a matter about which to pray and not to laugh. All Christians believe that the Lord can forgive sin. Can He not, then, make men victorious over a habit that makes of none effect the Word even under the most soul-stirring preaching? It is our conviction that sleeping in church is as bad as some habits for which church members are disciplined.

Right habits of eating, sleeping, work, and recreation will help in this matter; but only a full realization of the harm that comes to oneself as well as to others will bring about a reformation. The habit can be overcome. It may take much prayer, study, and an unstoppable determination; but it can be done. And it is worth while. Saints that Satan can overcome in no other way he puts to sleep in the church. He knows that the effort is worth while, for so much is lost while men doze in church that the loss is equivalent to getting them to do positive evil. And too many saints are willing to cooperate with Satan in this matter. Some feel that they are at least not doing any harm while they are asleep. Herein they are mistaken.

Did the disciples lose anything the night they went to sleep after Jesus had asked them to stay awake? Much in every way. When Jesus came and found them asleep, He said, "What, could you not watch with me one hour?" Matthew 26:40. But they could not keep awake. "He came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy." Verse 43. When He came the third time He said, "Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." Verse 45.

Jesus was passing through the deep waters, and they were reaching up to the soul. He longed for human sympathy as He was going into the hour of darkness when He should no longer see the Father's reconciling face. "Could you not watch with me one hour?"

was the plea that came from the Savior. This plea was addressed to Peter, James, and John—those who were nearest to Him and for whom He had done so much. They were not unwilling, but the flesh was weak.

It was the hour of darkness for the Son of God. Drops of blood stood on His forehead as He resisted the fierce temptations of Satan. As humanity was trembling in the balance, Jesus asked that the cup be taken away from Him if it were possible. Satan attacked Him, doubts pressed His soul, and the thought that He was dying and that no one cared drove Him to His feet to receive such comfort as the knowledge that the three disciples were praying for Him might give. But He found them asleep.

Again He went back to struggle with the powers of darkness. Fiercer than ever came the doubts, the temptations, the terrible thought that no one was with Him, that even those who were nearest and dearest to Him did not understand. Again He struggled to the side of the three, hoping against hope that they would be awake and praying. But they were asleep. The third time He came back, but with the same result. Even under these conditions He excused them. “The spirit is willing,” He said, “but the flesh is weak.”

Probably John never forgave himself for going to sleep that night. Jesus wanted someone near to Him, someone who understood. It was the privilege of John to take that sacred form in his arms and comfort Him as John himself many times had been comforted. But he failed Jesus. The Master trod the wine press alone.

Peter, James, and John not only failed to be of any help to Jesus that night but sustained a loss that was all but fatal to them. Jesus had said, “Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation.” Matthew 26:41. He knew that severe temptations would come to them within a few hours. To save them from being overcome, He had asked them to watch and pray. Had they done so, they would have received help and strength, and would not have forsaken their Lord in the hour of darkness, nor would Peter have denied his Lord. This is the reason for the Savior’s request that they watch and pray lest they enter into temptation.

Jesus is anxious that nothing shall come in to catch away the Word. All that does so must be banished from the life. We need to pray that we shall not receive the Word as those did who received it by the wayside.

The Stony Places

“He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that hears the word, and anon with joy receives it; yet hath he not root in himself, but endures for a while: for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by and by he is offended.” Matthew 13:20, 21.

The difficulty with the seed that fell on stony ground was that there was not soil enough to form strong roots. For a plant to live, it must have a root that reaches below the surface, so that when storms come it will be rooted securely, and when drought occurs it will not be dependent on moisture in the topsoil only. Unless the roots go down into the subsoil, where they can find anchorage and moisture, the plant has little chance of survival.

Note the two expressions: “Because they had no deepness of earth,” and, “Because they had no root.” Verses 5, 6. To this verse 21 he adds, “not root in himself.”

Some of Christ’s parables deal with the fruit which a tree should bear. This parable deals with the root. Though the root may not be seen, it is as important as any other part of the plant. It is the root that supports the plant and draws up the nourishment from the earth. It is also the root that holds the plant when the storm comes. Unless the roots of a tree are strong, the tree will be weak. In fact, the tree is only as strong as its root.

In the life of every man there are hidden forces that constitute his strength or his weakness. A man may look like good material for a king, and even a prophet may be deceived, but God looks on the heart. “It came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord’s anointed is before him. But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” I Samuel 16:6,7.

Jesus was never satisfied with appearances only. He always looked beneath the surface. Men saw a fallen woman who ought to be stoned. Jesus saw a jewel in His crown. Men saw a poor unstable Peter. Jesus saw a rock. Men saw the two mites that the poor widow contributed. Jesus saw a gift greater than that of any of the others. Men saw a man crucified on a cross. Jesus saw the salvation of a world. Men saw One buried in a tomb and the end of an obscure movement. Jesus saw through the tomb to the glorious consummation of the kingdom.

Foundation Important

In any structure the foundation is most important. If it is not laid deep and broad and on solid rock or firm soil, the structure will not survive. It was of this Jesus spoke when He told the parable of the two houses, one built on sand and the other on solid rock. When the rain descended and the flood came and the wind blew, the house that was built on sand went down, “and great was the fall of it,” but the one that was built on rock “fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.” (Matthew 7:24-27.)

In any undertaking which men attempt where the results are to be lasting, most careful attention must be given to the fundamentals, to the foundation on which the superstructure will rest. If the Golden Gate is to be spanned, it is not enough to hang a graceful network of wires and cables in the air. There must be months and years of careful, hard work to find the right kind of foundation on which to place the tremendous structure which men admire. This work must be done in slime and mud and water, far below the surface, where darkness reigns, where treacherous currents make work all but impossible, and where cold numbs the whole being. Day after day this work must go on; there must be no giving up, no slackening or abandonment of effort because of difficulties encountered. When at last the foundation is laid other men may continue the work and carry it to successful completion. Careless multitudes will later cross the bridge admiring the wonderful structure which men have built and the surpassing beauty of the view to

be obtained from its lofty heights, giving not one thought to the toilers who laid the foundation, who worked in darkness and silence, the unsung heroes of one of the mightiest achievements of men.

But the thinking man will not forget them. He appreciates to some degree the importance of the work which is unseen by human eyes; and he understands that in all worth-while endeavors there is work to be done which men may not appreciate or rightly value, but which constitutes the real worth of any undertaking. Unless a good foundation is laid, it is no use to build the superstructure.

As it is in a real building, so it is in religion, so it is in character building, so it is in intellectual achievements. A good, strong foundation must be laid before much progress can be made. How often students chafe at being drilled in the fundamentals; how often music pupils rebel at finger exercises; how often athletes complain of unremitting practice! But proficiency can never be obtained without constant and even tiresome work. No; neglecting the fundamentals means a stifling of progress. It means that the heights will never be reached. In intellectual matters there can be no real progress without a good foundation.

Christ wants men and women who are rooted and grounded in the truth, who will stand when the storms come, and who will not succumb when tribulation and persecution arise. He wants good material, not such as will endure for only a short time and then give up when the going becomes difficult. The material Christ wants is solid, strong, durable material—not hay, straw, or stubble.

Too many Christians do not build solidly and are not ready for the scorching sun and devastating drought. They are a kind of hothouse Christians who do very well under expert attention and controlled conditions, but who have never learned to stand alone, and who wither and collapse when the icy blasts of winter strike them. Hothouse flowers are beautiful for decoration, in some respects more beautiful than some sturdy flowers, of the field; but they have neither enduring beauty nor value unless they are transplanted and made to grow deeper roots in firmer soil. Some flowers can be so transplanted, and some cannot, and endure only for a little while; men admire them while they are in bloom, but they are soon cast out and forgotten.

Christ seeks men and women for the kingdom who are inured to hardship and will not wither when the first wind strikes. It is through trials and difficulties that men are prepared to serve, and those who are unable or unwilling to submit to the discipline necessary will not be able to pass the test. They are not fit for the kingdom.

“Because they had no root, they withered away.” There are those who accept Christianity because it appeals to them as an aesthetic religion, a religion of beauty and charm, of high ideals and noble endeavors. The stately church edifices attract them; the dignified music charms them; the imposing ritual impresses them; the message of the cross enlists their sympathies. They enjoy the congenial church atmosphere; the members are respected citizens; the congregation, above the average in social standing and influence. They appreciate a church home, and they are satisfied. Shielded from the storms and stress of life, they worship God in the seclusion of a well-ordered institution; and with the assurance of immortality promised to those who remain faithful to the end, they are well provided for and content.

The crude conceptions of persecution and tribulation such as Christ mentions in the parable, are far from their minds. That, they believe, belongs to a past age.

A Conflict Coming

It is not God's plan that His people shall live sheltered lives. Some may be permitted to do this, but generally speaking, it is God's intention to prepare them to withstand the strain and stress of life. It is to this He refers when He mentions tribulation and persecution arising “because of the word.” When such storms come it will be necessary for each to have “root in himself.” One must have “deepness of earth,” or he will never stand.

There is another kind of storm coming, an intellectual battle—pagan philosophy, modern skepticism, and pseudo science arraigned against the believers in divine revelation. Those who at that time have only a superficial understanding of what they believe will not be able to survive the struggle. We must dig deep if we are to give an intelligent reason for our belief.

The wisdom and education of this world are pointed toward the destruction of religion and faith in God. The worldly educational system is destructive of faith in the Bible. Science, because of false interpretation of facts, has been used as a point of attack. Before this mighty Goliath, God's people have quavered and fled, and multitudes have deserted to the enemy. The world is sure that no one can stand against this giant, who impiously defies the armies of the living God. Christians are on the defensive when they should know that the best defense is attack. Unless Christians take the offensive they will be defeated. It is time that they show the courage which is theirs by right. If they do, many will join the battle, and victory will be theirs. Science so called is no match for the truth of God.

Intellectual Preparation

If Christians are to take the intellectual offensive, they must prepare for real warfare. Too long they have taken an apologetic attitude and used the shield more than they have the sword, even to the extent that many do not know how to use the sword any more than did Peter, who succeeded only in cutting off a man's ear. If Christians are to be successful in combat with the world and its wisdom, they must know their Bible, they must be able to present an array of facts to confound the deductions of science falsely so called, and they must do so without equivocation or evasion and not merely as a matter of negation. No established fact of science can be ignored; no shrug of the shoulder will dispose of evidence; every shred of testimony on whatever side it may happen to be, must be considered.

What is needed is an aggressive body of Christian men and women of education, who will band together for the pursuit of truth, who will not be intimidated by the false cry of intellectual narrowness or discouraged by snobbery or ridicule. Too long have Christian men of scientific standing kept in the background and let men who teach faith-destroying theories hold the center of the stage. In spite of protestations of broadness of view and intellectual tolerance, there is no greater intolerance than that shown by some

who are vociferous advocates of academic freedom. The contempt and ridicule which they heap upon such as disagree with them is a mighty testimony against their capacity for using rightly the freedom which they demand. It is time that Christians cast away all fear, gather their resources-which are many-and go forth to do valiant battle for truth and righteousness. In a battle between the mighty Goliath and little David, let us cast our lot with David.

“Turn you to the strong hold, you prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee. When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man. And the Lord shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning; and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. The Lord of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar. And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land.” Zechariah 9:12-16.

The sons of Zion here mentioned are the Christians, God's people. The sons of Greece are the worldlings. Greece stands for worldly wisdom: “The Greeks seek after wisdom.” I Corinthians 1:22. To preach Christ crucified is “unto the Greeks foolishness.” Verse 23. It is against these that God will raise up the sons of Zion and will make them as “the sword of a mighty man.” Zechariah 9:13. As the battle is joined, “the Lord God shall blow the trumpet,” “and the Lord shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: ... the Lord of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones.... And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people.” Verses 14-16.

They shall “subdue with sling stones.” This has a familiar sound. It was with sling stones that David subdued the mighty Goliath, who had defied the armies of the Lord and despised David. But David knew Goliath's weak point. And when he struck he struck hard.

The enemies of religion have ridiculed God's people and defied the armies of Israel long enough. The people of God have hid in the valleys and refused to join battle with the Goliaths of modernism, scientific or religious. Too long have the uncircumcised Philistines challenged the armies of the living God, and it is time that the issue should be settled. God will help His people. They will not be put to shame. We are eager to see the battle start. But we must bide God's time. Goliath's challenge should be accepted, and it will be. Read the story as it is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of the first book of Samuel.

For such a battle God's people need to be intellectually prepared. They must be rooted and grounded in the truth. It is most vital that they know the truth they believe. The roots of their knowledge and understanding must penetrate deeply into the soil of God's Word, or they will never be able to stand in the day of battle.

Long before the Scopes trial in Tennessee took place the following words were written, which seem prophetic of the test which will surely come, and of the outcome of which there is no doubt.

“When the human agents shall exercise their faculties to acquire knowledge, to become deep-thinking men. When they, as the greatest witnesses for God and the truth, shall have won in the field of investigation of vital doctrines concerning the salvation of the soul, that glory may be given to the God of heaven as supreme, then even judges and kings will be brought to acknowledge, in the courts of justice, in parliaments and councils, that the God who made the heavens and the earth is the only true and living God, the author of Christianity, the author of all truth, who instituted the seventh-day Sabbath when the foundations of the world were laid, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted together for joy. All nature will bear testimony, as designed, for the illustration of the word of God.” - Fundamentals of Christian Education, page 374, 375.

Spiritual Preparation

Important as are the intellectual qualifications needed, they do not begin to compare with the spiritual attainments necessary. It is possible to have all wisdom and all knowledge and yet not be rooted and grounded in the truth. Intellectual assent to truth does not save. There are those who know the truth but are not sanctified by it. They have no spiritual backbone; religiously they are as weak as water. Only a deep spiritual experience will suffice for the days to come.

A tree standing in the midst of a group of trees does not have the deep roots of a tree standing alone. If such a group of trees except one is cut down, the remaining tree will likely blow down in the first storm that comes. It has been shielded by the other trees; it has had no need of deep roots such as the lone tree has. Could it immediately strike deep down as soon as the other trees are cut down, it might yet survive. But this cannot be done, for roots are developed as they are needed, and the storms that blow are not gauged to the strength of the remaining tree. Strong roots must be developed as the tree matures and grows larger; they cannot be developed in later years except under very special conditions.

Spiritual growth is not unlike this. It is possible for us so to depend upon others that we fail to develop as we should. Friends are good, but we must not lean too hard upon them. Spiritual counselors are good, but they must not take the place of God. Ministers are good, but we must not trust to them for salvation. Each must have an individual experience apart from anyone else. He must grow roots for himself, or he will never stand. This is what Jesus had in mind when He said, “Yet hath he not root in himself, but endures for a while.” Matthew 13:21.

Here is where some ministers make a mistake. They feed the flock but never bring them to the point where they can feed themselves. A child must be fed. He cannot handle the spoon himself, and must have help. But as he grows older he should not be spoon fed. It is an anachronism to have a grown person fed as a child. He should know how to eat without having someone guide the spoon.

Novices in the faith must be fed. They must be given the milk of the Word. But as they grow older they should be led into the green pastures of the Word and be taught to seek their own food. The Bible is food for the soul, not for the minister only, but for all.

The minister should teach the people where they may find food; he should lead them to the cool fountains of water; he should guide them through the green pastures; but he must not make them so dependent on him that they are helpless without him. Some do this to their own hurt and that of the flock.

There are church members of long standing who have never been taught to find food for their own souls but are entirely dependent upon others for spiritual sustenance. This is not the plan of God. Ministers are not to make others dependent upon them. It is the privilege of every minister so to teach his flock that though they appreciate his ministration, they will be able to find food for themselves in the Word. This is how God would have it. There is no other way that men can be strongly rooted. There is no other way that they can develop into sturdy Christians who will be able to stand when drought comes and when storms blow.

We need a sturdier Christianity. We need sturdier Christians who have roots in themselves and who will endure not only when all goes well but when hardship and persecution come and the waters reach to the soul. This is evidently the intent of Jesus. Else He would not have spoken of tribulation and difficulties as being part of the lot of those who are to belong to the kingdom. He wants men and women who can endure hardship.

The Thorns

“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.” Matthew 13:22.

The care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word. This classification takes in the poor and the rich alike. We are likely to think that it is the poor who have the cares, and that the rich have none. But both rich and poor have cares. One is worried about his money because it brings him unnumbered cares; the other is worried about getting enough to supply his daily need and to meet his obligations. There is not much choice between the two kinds of cares, though curiously enough the rich think that the poor have little to worry over in comparison to their worries, and the poor think the same of the rich. Each thinks the other is better off.

This part of the parable does not deal with roots or with soil. It concerns itself with the fruit. To “the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches,” Mark adds “the lusts of other things entering in.” Mark 4:19. Men have a desire for the Word; they hear it and accept it; but when “other things” enter in, the Word is choked. It may be well to add here what Luke says in recording this parable. “That which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.” Luke 8:14.

Adding these statements together we have “the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches”; “the lusts of other things entering in”; among these “other things” are “the pleasures of this life,” and the result is that they “bring no fruit to perfection.”

From the reading, “He becomes unfruitful,” it appears that there is a possibility of fruit, but that the thorns choke the Word. Luke explains this by saying that they “bring no fruit to perfection.” We, therefore, understand that the fruit is there; it promises to produce a harvest; but the cares of this world and “other things entering in” choke the Word, and therefore no fruit is brought to perfection.

This is a tragedy in religion. The devil in this case does not catch away the Word. The soil is not thin, and there are no stones to hinder the roots from taking hold. There is development and promise of fruit, but it remains only a promise. No fruit is brought to perfection. It is choked to death by the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, by the pleasures of this life and by other things entering in. A promising, fruitful life is brought to naught. There can be no greater tragedy.

It is sad that men will reject the Word of life and count themselves unworthy of immortality. But it is infinitely sadder to see men accept the Word, start on the way to the kingdom, and then give up. That is what these do who are represented by the seed falling among thorns. They start, but the world is too strong for them, and they do not endure. Such will have no part in the kingdom.

Terah Died in Haran

There is a story recorded in the eleventh chapter of Genesis which points a lesson along the line of this parable. The story reads thus: “Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abraham's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan. And they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran.” Genesis 11: 31, 32.

Terah was the father of Abraham and lived in Ur of the Chaldees. He started out from this place “to go into the land of Canaan.” He never got there, for when he came to Haran, several hundred miles from the place where he started, but also several hundred miles from where he intended to go, he decided to stay, “and Terah died in Haran.”

Haran was located in the upper region of the Euphrates valley, about halfway to the Promised Land. It is not known what caused Terah to stay there and give up his intention of going on to Canaan. From chronology it appears that he stayed in Haran many years, and at last died there at the age of two hundred and five years. Terah means “one who delays.”

“Terah died in Haran.” This is a tragedy. He started for the land of Canaan but never got there. He went part of the way and then stopped. His intentions were good, for he started “to go into the land of Canaan.” But for some reason he failed to go all the way.

Note this by way of contrast. After the death of Terah, “Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran. And they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.” Genesis 12:5. The same words as were used of Terah are used of these. They also started “to go into the land of Canaan”; but the results were different, for “into the land of Canaan they came.” Abram did not stop when he got halfway. He kept on until he arrived in the land of Canaan.

We have seen many people, young and old, start for the spiritual Canaan. Some finished their journey; others have died in Haran. They started out well, but something drew away their interest. They were not ready to go all the way. They felt that if they reached Haran, it was enough. Perhaps they thought that after they had rested awhile they might go on. But they never did. They died in Haran.

What makes people stop halfway to the kingdom? Christ says that the cares of this life, the deceitfulness of riches, the pleasures of this life, and the lusts of other things are the causes.

There may be some who are reading this who are beset with the cares of this life. They may be in debt and see no way to pay their obligations. Their life savings are lost, and the shadows begin to lengthen. They are perplexed and do not know what to do. They are Christians, and they want to continue to be Christians; yet what are they to do under the circumstances? They are tempted to do what they know in their hearts they should not do. If they continue to be honest, it may mean still more loss to be added to that which they have already sustained.

Let such take heart. God lives. He still rules in the affairs of men. There is only one thing to do under these and under all circumstances: Follow Jesus wherever He may lead. Follow His counsel. The way may not seem clear; there may be clouds on the horizon; but there is light farther on. Follow on to know the Lord. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added. Let nothing hinder you from making a full surrender. Whatever be the cost, follow Jesus, and follow all the way.

Deceitfulness of Riches

There may be others who are reading this who are troubled with the deceitfulness of riches. A person need not necessarily be rich to have these difficulties. In fact, I suspect that more are troubled about riches who have little, than are troubled because they have much. It is the love of money rather than money itself that is the root of all evil; and a person who has very little money may still have a love of money.

There are those who wish to get rich quickly. They are willing to do almost anything to get money. They gamble, they trade on margins, they speculate with other people's money, and in the end they lose. There are those in responsible positions who borrow money from the till with the honest intention of paying it back. They have what they believe is "a sure thing"; but it fails, and they borrow more; then they are caught and go to jail. They were deceived by the expectation of riches. Let all who are contemplating any such course beware. It leads only to sorrow and shame, not only to the person involved but to his loved ones. There are persons in prison who are just as honest at heart as others who are outside. They did not mean to be dishonest. They were deceived. The deceitfulness of riches is something of which to be afraid.

There are others who really have means who are greatly in danger of being deceived by them. They are getting preferential treatment in this world because of their acquisitions. It is very easy for them to believe that God will not be unmindful of their position, and that He will not treat them as ordinary sinners. They are cultured and refined; they do not stoop to some of the grosser sins that others do; they are respectable in every way; why should they not have consideration? They are perplexed over the statement of Christ: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" Mark 10:23. When the disciples were astonished at this saying, Jesus added, "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" Verses 24, 25. When they were still astonished at this, and wondered how anyone could be saved, "Jesus looking upon them said, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible." Verse 27.

From these statements we learn that it is not riches in themselves that keep men out of heaven, but that it is trust in riches. "How hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" People who have riches are likely to trust in them. If they get into difficulty, they can often pay their way out. They are able to hire special legal talent. They can take advantage of the delays of the law such as the poor cannot. In many cases they get preferential treatment and can settle a case by the lavish use of their money. There are few instances in which their wealth is not of some help to them.

This is likely to carry over into their concept of religion. There has always been some way out for them. They have never been treated like ordinary mortals; they are cultured, refined, intelligent. Surely, they are not ordinary sinners, as bad as some of the disreputable people with whom they would not think of associating. They are willing to admit that they are not perfect, but they believe that their particular failings are of a different kind from those of other people. They know that the judge of all the earth is not impressed with their riches, yet in some way they expect different treatment from the rest. They have always received it here; why not in the world to come? This is part of what Jesus means by the deceitfulness of riches. It is hard for such ever to gain the kingdom.

The Pleasures of This Life

There are some who at this moment are undecided which way to go, to follow Christ and the conviction of their conscience, or to follow the world with what it has to offer. Before deciding, read the following story.

There is a young man mentioned in the Bible who had this choice, and who chose the right. He is not very well known, and for some reason his experience has not been given the prominence it deserves. We have reference to Manaen, Herod's foster brother, mentioned in the book of Acts. "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul." Acts 13:1.

Manaen

Nothing is known about this Manaen beyond this brief record. From this it is possible, however, to construct much of his history. He was a foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, as the margin states, and was brought up with him.

Herod the tetrarch was the one who had John beheaded at the request of Salome, the daughter of Herodias, his wife. The story is told by Matthew as follows: "At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him. For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger. And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother. And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus." Matthew 14:1-12.

This is a most distressing story. Herod was a weak man and a tyrant. He had taken his brother's wife, Herodias, which was not lawful, and John had told him so. She became furious and demanded that John be imprisoned and killed. Herod, to please her, put John in prison, and as she had an inward grudge against him, she "would have killed him; but she could not." Mark 6:19, margin. She dared not kill John, for Herod knew "that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." Verse 20.

Herod Under Conviction

Note the situation. John is in prison. Herodias hates him and wants him killed. Herod is afraid to kill John. While John is in prison Herod observes him, rather, keeps him, shields him. "And when he heard him, he did many things." What does that mean? "And heard him gladly." Let us reconstruct the story.

Herod is under conviction. He has put John in prison and would even have killed him. (Matthew 14:5.) But as he observes him, he comes to the conclusion that John is a just man and holy, and he dares not put him to death. At the same time he dares not free him, for his wife has an inward grudge against John and wants him killed. So John is permitted to languish in prison. Herod calls John in to hear him, "and when he heard him, he did many things." What were those things? We do not know, but we gather from the connection that Herod did many things while under conviction that he would not otherwise have done. And he "heard him gladly." It was really a pleasure for Herod to listen to John, and we may believe that John felt that his imprisonment was not in vain when he had opportunity to preach to the reigning monarch, a privilege that might not otherwise be had. We do not know whether others were present at these meetings with John, but from what we know of Oriental monarchs we would not expect that he would be left alone with a prisoner. Was Manaen present at any of these seasons? We do not know.

The Feast

Then came the fatal feast. Salome, the young girl, is dancing before a gathering of men at the birthday of Herod. She pleases him and is promised with an oath that she can have whatever she wants. She goes out to her mother, who immediately sends her back with a request for the head of John the Baptist. "The king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother." Matthew 14:9-11.

It was at a court such as this that Manaen was brought up. He was a foster brother of Herod and was brought up with him. Oriental courts were noted for their corruption and immorality. In any court where there are princes and princesses with little to do and riches and servants at their command, there is bound to be all manner of evil.

Take the case before us. Salome was dancing before the drunken group gathered at the feast. Such dancing was generally in the nude. She is promised what she wants, and demands the head of John, which is brought to her on a platter. The bloody head of the prophet was carried by a dissolute girl to her mother, who, according to traditions, vents her wrath upon him by piercing his tongue with an awl. We can conceive of no more horrible picture, or one showing more the degradation of the people connected with it.

As long as the women of a nation remain virtuous there is hope for that nation. When they fall, when they go the way of the men, there is little if any hope. The women of the court of Herod could hardly be worse than is here described.

A Real Man

It was in this court that Manaen was brought up. We do not know what happened or when, but we do know that after a while Manaen quit the court, and joined the little church at Antioch. (Acts 13:1.) How we would like to have the details of that transformation! Maybe he had heard the preaching of John the Baptist. Maybe he was present when John was called in before Herod. He might have been present the night when John's head was demanded. We do not know; we are not told. All we do know is that he was brought up with Herod, that in some way he was converted and joined the church at Antioch, where he was given the work of teaching.

We can imagine, however, that the change was not easily brought about. He had all inducements to stay in the palace. He doubtless had a good living and not much to do. When he first decided to cast his lot with Christians, what an uproar it must have

made at the court! Was he beside himself? There was going to be a feast that night, a hilarious time would be had. There were plenty of princesses of the type of Salome to tempt him. He was certainly not going to make a fool of himself by joining an obscure sect.

Every inducement, every temptation, was placed in his way to keep him from leaving the court. And how would he make a living? The whole thing was absurd from whatever angle one considered it.

It must have taken tremendous courage for Manaen to attend the first meetings of the Christians. But he did not hesitate. He took his stand. He followed his convictions, and God honored him. He never became a great man like Paul or one of the apostles. He simply did faithfully the work given him to do. And we would never have known about him had not that little verse been placed in the book of Acts.

If there are those who are reading this who are standing at the crossroads, undecided which path to take, consider the case of Manaen. He was a prince. He had a greater future before him than is given to most people. He had little to gain as far as this world is concerned by becoming a Christian. He had, on the other hand, everything to lose. No one, probably, has had more temptations placed before him than Manaen. It must have been made very hard for him to break with his companions. Ridicule of every kind must have been his lot. But he took his stand. He broke away. And his name is inscribed as one of the princes of Israel in the books above. So, dear reader, young or old, do not hesitate to cast your lot with God's people. Whatever the cost, follow the Master.

Besides the pleasures of the world choking the Word, "other things" are also mentioned. We do not know what the "other things entering in" are, but they probably include whatever there may be that holds one back from perfecting character to the glory of God. Christ in the parable says that they "brought no fruit to perfection." I have known young men to be held back by young women, and the reverse. I have known children held back by their parents, and parents by children. I have known position, preferment, wages, to hold men back. I have known of those who were afraid of what others might think or say, and I have known some who were afraid of ridicule. I have known some who were afraid of losing their position, and others who were afraid of losing their home. All these things and many more may be included in "other things entering in." I must leave the reader to fill in the rest from his own experience.

The Good Ground

Some of the seed fell on good ground. Thank the Lord for that. We might be discouraged if we should find that the work of seed sowing was entirely wasted. It is not. There are those who accept the Word in good and honest hearts and bring forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold.

We are at times tempted to believe that faith has entirely perished from the earth, and with Elijah say, I, even I only, am left." I Kings 19:14. Then God gently reminds us that there are yet seven thousand in Israel that have not bowed their knees to Baal, that there are yet those who seek Him in truth and uprightness. God wants us to know that He has resources of which we know little, and that when the time comes He will show His power. We are therefore not discouraged. God still lives and rules.

The seed that fell "on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." Luke 8:15. The Word "patience" here as in most places in the New Testament means "endurance, steadfastness," and denotes that which continues uninterrupted as opposed to that which endures only for the moment. The thought is that the fruit is not to be brought forth only once, but that there is to be a continual fruit bearing, year after year.

Such as hear and understand the Word are to bring forth fruit. This fruit is to be seen first in the life of the individual, and then in the lives of those for whom he labors. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Galatians 5:22, 23.

This is the fruit that God wants us to bring forth. Look over that list again. It is wonderfully comprehensive. It is the character which Christ wants us to have. It is the requirement needed for admission into the kingdom.

Some brought forth a hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty. According to the capacity of each he was accepted. There are those who measure themselves with others and become discouraged because they are sure that they can never reach the heights that others have reached. Let such take heart. Jesus knows. He wants us to reach the highest standard of which we are capable; but He recognizes that there are differences and that some will not bring forth a hundred fold. Let such bring forth sixty or thirty. But let no one think that if he is capable of a hundred fold, God will be satisfied with anything less.

There is danger in measuring ourselves with others. Some do this and become satisfied with themselves because they have brought forth sixty fold when others have brought forth thirty. This is dangerous. Some who bring forth thirty are doing all of which they are capable, whereas there are some who bring forth sixty fold whom God expects to yield a hundred. It is therefore possible for one who brings forth sixty to do less and get less credit than one who brings forth thirty. Let no one measure himself with anyone else. It is dangerous and generally deceptive.

Summary

In the beginning of His ministry Jesus did not teach in parables. As He met opposition He decided to use the parable form of teaching, as it would convey all He wanted to say without subjecting Him to the charge that He had said that which was objectionable. A parable both hides and reveals truth, in exact proportion to the capacity of the hearer. It is, therefore, admirably fitted to audiences such as Christ had, comprising both the learned and the unlearned. Each received that which he was capable of comprehending.

According to this parable of the sower, there are four kinds of soil in which the seed falls: the first, in which the seed does not spring up at all, because the evil one catches it away; the second, in which the seed germinates and springs up, but because of shallowness of soil and lack of deep root, withers and dies; the third, in which the seed germinates, springs up, and bears fruit, but

does not perfect the fruit, because it is choked by the thorns; the fourth, in which the seed falls into good ground, springs up, and bears fruit and perfects it, some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirty fold.

The parable of the sower, as the other parables of the kingdom, illustrates the nature of the kingdom, also the qualification of those who are to have a part in it, and the causes for failure to enter it.

Three causes of failure are mentioned in this parable. First, those who hear but do not understand. They are those by the wayside, where the ground is trodden down and the seed does not penetrate; the evil one catches it away. They are such as go to church and hear the Word spoken, but their hearts are closed to the appeals made. They live for themselves. They are interested in the business aspect only. to the spiritual application they are strangers. These include such as hear the Word but are dull of comprehension because of physical conditions, such as are asleep or whose minds are occupied with the things of the wayside where the world goes by.

The second cause for failure is lack of soil and lack of root. They are the shallow, impulsive listeners, who are enthusiastic for the moment but very soon cool off. They are such as are ready to do and promise anything, but do not always keep their promises. They are such as pledge but do not pay, are willing to start but do not finish. Such will not get into the kingdom unless they repent.

The third cause for failure is worldliness, ambition, pleasures of this life, riches, and other things entering in. Worldliness and Christianity will not mix. To attempt to mix them means loss of eternal life. Love of the world will choke the Word.

This, the first of the parables of the kingdom, teaches important lessons. To heed them is our salvation.

25. Parables Of The Kingdom - B

The Tares in the Field

ANOTHER parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, did not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while you gather up the tares, you root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather you together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.” Matthew 13:24-30.

After the multitude had been sent away and Jesus had gone into the house, the disciples came to Him to have Him explain the parable. “He answered and said unto them, He that sowed the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world. The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Verses 37-43.

Church Members Should Be Christians

All church members should be Christians. No one has a right to be a member of an organization which stands for certain principles unless he is in harmony with those principles and lives up to them.

That all church members should be Christians is, of course, ideal; but this goal will not be reached until all come into the unity of the faith. The fact is that there are those in the church who do not live up to the principles of the gospel, and have no intention of doing so. There are others who claim to be Christians and have the outward appearance of such, but are not sincere all the way through. They are hypocrites. What can be done with such? How can the church be kept pure and clean as God wants it?

It is evidently not possible to apply a test of fellowship that will keep all undesirables out of the church. To do this it would be necessary for those who admit members to have the gift of discernment, and this gift would be too dangerous to give to any man for such a purpose. All that can be done is to set up certain objective tests and accept the candidate's testimony as to himself, unless it is obviously false. Under this method some become members who have no right to take the name of Christ, and who are a reproach to the church. It is the presence of such that Jesus discusses in the parable of the tares.

It is evidently to Satan's advantage to gain membership in the Christian church for some of his adherents. He will thus have his representatives present at the councils of the church, and will be enabled to give such advice as he may wish, and will also be in a position to bore from within. This is somewhat on the same principle upon which nations employ spies, especially in times of war. If spies can gain access to, or receive, reports of councils that are held, the enemy is much advantaged. As the controversy between good and evil is a real warfare, it may be expected that Satan will take every advantage and use every opportunity, and if he can gain anything by entering the church under false pretenses, he will not hesitate to do so. The church is to expect this and to take measures accordingly.

The parable of the tares teaches the lesson that Christ is not responsible for the presence of the tares. He sowed good seed. An enemy sowed the tares. This should effectively dispose of the charge sometimes made by nonchurch members that Christians are not any better than others. To prove their contention, they point to church members who are hypocrites and are using the church as a cloak. “Look at the kind of members you have,” they say; “they are far worse than are those without the church.” We cannot always meet the accusation, for there are those in the church who are not an honor to it. But we consider it highly questionable ethics for

emissaries of the evil one to seek and hold membership in the church under false pretenses, thereby enabling other enemies of the church to point to these very emissaries and charge the church with their doubtful conduct.

In Palestine there is a weed called lolium in Latin, darnel in English, which is doubtless the one meant in the parable. It resembles wheat very much—so much, in fact, that it is quite impossible to tell the two apart in the earlier stages of growth. Only later, when the wheat begins to head out, does the difference appear. Evil men would sometimes resort to the very thing Christ mentions in the parable, sow tares in a neighbor's field. It would not be easy to detect the offender unless he was caught in the act, for the effect of his work would not be apparent for many weeks. It was an act not merely of unfriendliness, but of downright meanness and wickedness. It was evil and only evil.

Hypocrites

The fact that the tares are so much like the wheat lends point to the parable. It deals with those in the church who appear to be wheat but are not; in other words, the parable deals with hypocrites in the church. They look like wheat, for a time they are indistinguishable from it, but after a while the difference appears. Like the tares, they bear no fruit.

Hypocrites have done untold damage to the cause of God. They are members of the church; they act like them in many respects, but they are not genuine. They cannot be depended on. They flatter, but are insincere in it. They promise, but they do not keep their promises. They wear the livery of heaven but are in the service of the enemy of souls. They deceive while they themselves are being deceived. I do not think that any avowed enemy of God can do or has done so much harm to the church as have those who are members of it, but in heart are insincere.

In His ministry Christ often mentioned hypocrites. Of none did He say sharper things and with none did He seem more impatient. Hear these scathing words: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore you shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.” Matthew 23:13-15. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone. You blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore you be witnesses unto yourselves, that you are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill you up then the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell?” Matthew 23:23-33.

It is not easy to measure the evil which deserves such threatening of wrath as Christ here pronounces. We are almost astonished to hear them from the lips of the Savior, and are wondering whether we are reading aright. But there is no doubt about it. These are the words Jesus uttered. And these burning words were not uttered against Sodom or Gomorrah, against Baal worship or the persecutors of the saints. They were uttered against honored members of the church, leaders in Israel, teachers of the people. They were uttered against the most faithful observers of the ordinances of the church, who were punctual in their obligations, who fasted and prayed and were zealous missionaries, even to the extent of compassing sea and land to make a convert. It would not be easy to find fault with their outward conduct; it was what they were, the motives that prompted them, that were at fault.

The Pharisees were typical hypocrites. They did not commit any of the great sins as men count sin. When a hypocrite commits a great sin he ceases to that extent to be a hypocrite and becomes an ordinary sinner. The stock in trade of a hypocrite is to appear as nearly like a Christian as possible; hence, he must carefully follow all the rules of right conduct. He must pay tithe, even of anise and cummin; he must fast; he must pray regularly—making sure, of course, that men know about it; he must observe the Sabbath, go to church, and observe all the rules of the church. If he is ever called to account, he will be able to point to a past record often more impressive than that of his accusers. He considers himself an example of what others ought to be, and is even able to convince men of this.

Such were the Pharisees, and it was these whom Christ denounced. For them He reserved His direst threatening, even though their outward deportment was most respectable. We draw the conclusion from this that hypocrisy is one of the worst sins which afflicts men, and that we are to shun it like leprosy.

The genius of hypocrisy is insincerity. No hypocrite can be entirely honest. There is a streak of undependability in him that makes it unwise ever to rely upon his word. He may not tell an entire untruth, but it is never safe to believe implicitly in what he says. Even when he speaks the truth it is with biased intent, and a feeling of uneasiness is left in the mind of the hearer. His is a most deplorable reputation to have.

Although hypocrites sooner or later become known for what they are, it is often a long time before they are discovered. They are expert at making explanations, and often the one sinned against feels like making apology for ever having any evil suspicion, and is

willing to trust the hypocrite again. All in all, a hypocrite is a most interesting person to watch in operation, but one to be feared as a friend or confidant.

What can be done about hypocrites and other sinners? Shall we pluck them up by the root and cleanse the church of evildoers? This is what the servants of the householder proposed. 'Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?' they asked. To this Jesus answered, "Nay; lest while you gather up the tares, you root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather you together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." Matthew 13:29, 30.

To some this may appear to be a most unsatisfactory solution. But it is Christ's solution, and there is none better. There are some things that cannot be adjusted in this life, but which must await the general judgment. At that time "the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Matthew 13:41-43.

Ananias

An example of what God does with hypocrites is recorded in the fifth chapter of Acts. "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not your own? and after it was sold, was it not in your own power? why has thou conceived this thing in your heart? thou has not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether you sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things." Acts 5:111.

Ananias had a right to sell his property and give to God's cause whatever part he thought best. It would not be right, however, to sell the property and give part of the proceeds to the Lord while giving the impression that he gave all. That would be dishonesty and lying. But this is exactly what Ananias did; and his wife stood by him.

They wanted credit for giving all when they gave only part. And so Ananias was carried out dead; and when his wife confirmed his statements, she was carried out dead also. As a result "fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things," "and of the rest dared no man join himself to them." Verse 13. When it became known that those in the church who were not strictly honest died, the rest did not dare join the church lest they die also. In this incident the words of the prophet Isaiah were fulfilled:

"The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walks righteously, and speaks uprightly; he that despises the gain of oppressions, that shakes his hands from holding of bribes, that stopped his ears from hearing of blood, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil. He shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Your eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." Isaiah 33:14-17.

The Case Today

We are not to think that all hypocrites lived in the time of Christ, or that only Pharisees are hypocrites. Sad to say, not all church members are free from pretense or from wanting to appear different or better than they are. Too many wish to be thought wiser, better, richer, or more influential than the truth and the circumstances warrant.

The question that was asked of the wife of Jeroboam of old might well be asked of some today: "Why feigns thou thyself to be another?" I Kings 14:6. Most people have a tendency in that direction. They like to appear other than they are.

Hypocrisy shows itself in many ways. All boasting is of this nature. There are those who proclaim loudly what they have done, what they have seen, where they have been, whom they have associated with. This is an attempt to show off, to appear to be what they are not. They remind us of the little boy who was very much interested in military maneuvers and was most anxious to be taken notice of by some of the officers. ' One day he came running home telling with great gusto that the general himself had spoken to him. This gained him great admiration till it became known that what the general had said was, "Get out of here, you nuisance."

What shall we say of those who drive expensive automobiles to impress their neighbors; who live beyond their means to obtain social prestige; who are willing to pass through almost any sacrifice to be mentioned in the social register? What shall we say of those who flaunt unearned titles; of pastors who proclaim themselves doctors; of teachers who wish to be known as professors while they have no right to the designation? What shall we say of the extravagant claims made in advertising whether it be of some tooth paste or of a great revivalist? What shall we say of writers whose chief claim to distinction is their extravagant use of adjectives; of cinema exhibitions whose attractions are in a perverted and false view of life, of newspapers that make a mountain appear like a mole hill, and a mole hill like a mountain? All these pretend to be what they are not, or present things in an exaggerated light.

One encouraging feature of this is that most people can see through this camouflage. When we read, "Authorities are agreed upon," we wonder whether there is more than one obscure individual who has so committed himself. When we hear, "A number of

people say,” we remember that one is a number. When we are told that there were thousands of people attending a meeting we wonder who counted them. There was the little boy who claimed that there were a million cats in the back yard. When reproved for his exaggeration he asserted that there were two anyway, maybe more.

Hypocrites, such as pretend to be what they are not, such as state what is not so, are still extant. It is well for us to see to it that our own skirts are clear, that we are honest all the way through. Hypocrisy is no part of religion. We must not tolerate it in ourselves. God wants His people to be sincere. Whenever we detect the least sign of it in our lives, we should immediately take stock of where we are and where we are going. It is a most deceitful affliction.

Church Discipline

From what has been said some may draw the conclusion that if we are not to root out the tares in the church, there is to be no church discipline, that men can do what they please and still remain members of the church. This is not the case. God has given very definite standards which are to be applied in church fellowship, and men cannot transgress these and expect to retain their standing.

The parable of the tares deals with hypocrites chiefly, those who are so near like the wheat in appearance that they cannot be distinguished from it. God can see the difference, but men cannot. The reason for this is that the difference is not so much in what is done as in the motive for doing it. And men cannot judge motives; all they can do is to deal with the outward act.

It would be most disastrous if men were to attempt to judge motives. Only the man and God know the motives that prompted him. If a man does well, we are not to inquire into and judge his motives. We must leave that to God, who in due time will take the matter in hand.

It is with motives that Christ deals when He says, 'Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.' Matthew 7:1,2.

If motives were to be judged by men, most unfortunate results would follow. If a man were to give a sum of money to the church, some might suspect that he was doing it for ulterior purposes, perhaps to gain influence or control. This might or might not be the case. But if men were thus to be suspected of unworthy motives and be subject to church discipline, there would be no way that a man could do any good and not be charged with evil intent. There are many good souls who are doing all they can for the kingdom. If other men were to judge their motives, much unjust judgment would be rendered. There is no way in which a charge of impure motives can be met. There is no defense against the charge of insincerity. For this reason God wants us to stay out of the field of judging. He wants that left to Himself for He alone can read the hearts of men.

Hypocrites also know that there is no way in which their acts can be judged-except by God and such as have the spirit of discernment-and they are quick to take advantage of the situation. Hypocrites may flourish, and the temptation may be great to take matters in hand. But God says it is better to wait. It is too dangerous to attempt to judge motives. We are to leave that to the judge of all. But let no one think that this means that sin is to be tolerated in the church. God wants order. He wants His people to deal faithfully with sin. Church discipline must not be slacked.

The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven

“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds. But when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Another parable spoke he unto them; 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 13:31-33.

These two parables concern the growth of the kingdom; the parable of the mustard seed dealing with the outward growth, the parable of the leaven with the inward growth.

The Mustard Seed

There are seeds that are smaller than the mustard seed; but when the size of the plant produced is taken into consideration, it is the least of all seeds. Thompson, in his *The Land and the Book*, speaks of mustard plants “as high as a horse and its rider.”

It must have taken great faith on the part of Christ to believe that His followers could carry on the work successfully after He left them. There was every indication that the Jews would reject Christ. Few, if any, of the leaders of the nation believed in Him, and none had joined Him. The rich were not pouring their wealth at His feet. He had the active opposition of the scribes and the Pharisees, and the political leaders were watching Him to see what He would do, fearful of an uprising.

The multitudes that followed Christ could not be depended upon. They were fickle and easily led, and might readily be turned against Him. With all these difficulties facing them, could the twelve disciples be expected to be able to continue the work after the Master was gone? Could Peter and James and John and the others carry on? They were not established in the faith. There was strife among them as to who should be the greatest. There was every reason to think that they would turn back to their fishing as soon as opportunity presented itself. Peter, who should be strong, was weak. Judas, who carried the money, could not be trusted. Altogether the outlook was not very encouraging.

It was under these circumstances that Christ spoke the parable of the mustard seed. He was in effect saying: “What you see now is very small. The kingdom of which I speak does not look very promising. But I want you to know that it is like the mustard seed. It is the least of all seeds, but when it grows up it becomes the largest of all plants. So is My kingdom. It looks small and insignificant. But wait. It will grow. It will exceed your fondest expectation.”

We have seen this parable fulfilled. The kingdom has grown. It has altered every human institution; it has affected every nation. It has influenced thought; it has influenced civilizations; it has set up kings; it has dethroned kings. Christianity is the largest single influence in the world. The history of Christianity is the history of the progress of the human race.

The Leaven

But wonderful as has been the growth and influence of the kingdom outwardly, it is the influence of Christianity in the individual life that is of greatest importance. This the parable of the leaven presents.

The kingdom of heaven is like leaven. In other places leaven represents sin, but in this instance it stands for the kingdom of God. In the parable the woman hides the leaven in three measures of meal-the ordinary size of a baking in those days-until the whole is leavened. (Genesis 18:6.)

Leaven works quietly, secretly. Unless arrested by some outside agency it continues its work until it leavens the whole lump. It is not only sin that is pervasive. The gospel also is. It will work on till it has leavened all.

Leaven works from the inside. It must be hidden in the meal, mixed with it, before it can do any good. The leaven cannot be seen, but it is evident to all that some power is working within the dough and effecting changes.

So it is with Christianity. God's power must come into the life. It must permeate the whole being. It works quietly, but effectively, and leavens the whole lump. As the dough cannot be used or sustain life until the leaven has done its work, so the Christian is not fit to communicate life to others until his own life is permeated with the leavening power of the gospel. And even as dough, permeated by leaven, must yet go through another process of fire before it is finally perfected, so the Christian must go through a like process. When the work is finally done, when the fiery trials have burned out all dross, the work of fitting the individual for the kingdom is completed. Not until then is he ready.

God in His own way gets men ready for the kingdom. There is much hewing to be done, many corners to be squared, many rough places to be smoothed down, many dull places to be polished, before we are ready. In the words of the parable, the whole lump must be leavened, the whole being consecrated to God, before the work is complete. God wants every man complete in Christ Jesus. Most of us have many places that need "touching up." We have come a long way, perhaps, but we have yet a long way to go.

The Experience of Paul

Paul was in many respects a most remarkable man. He was a chosen vessel to bring the light to the Gentiles. He worked more and harder than any of the other disciples, and God blessed him abundantly. Yet he was not perfect. The whole lump had not been leavened. God saw that there were yet some experiences he must pass through to fit him for the kingdom.

Paul was probably little more than thirty years old when he received the call from heaven on the way to Damascus. He immediately started to preach; but because of opposition was forced to discontinue, at least for a while. He spent some time in Arabia, after which we lose sight of him for some years. It was not till he was well past forty, perhaps forty-five, that he began his public work in earnest. From then till he was past sixty he worked almost night and day, and accomplished the extensive work recorded in the book of Acts and in his epistles. Though we cannot be certain of the chronology, it does not seem possible to stretch the period of his active labor much above twenty years. In this time he traveled thousands of miles, raised up churches, preached incessantly, educated young laborers, and wrote most of his epistles. When he was sixty-odd years old he had more ambitious plans than ever; he intended to visit Rome; he planned on going to Spain; it seemed that he was only beginning the work that he had in mind to do. He was yet in the full strength of manhood, his mind unimpaired, his vision that of a young man, his experience that of a veteran. He had come to the point where his influence and authority was admitted, his position as the apostle of the Gentiles unchallenged. He was of more service to the church than at any other time in his ministry. And he was planning great things.

But God had something else in mind for Paul. He was preparing him for the kingdom. There were some experiences Paul needed before he was entirely ready. And so Paul was sent to prison.

I doubt that any man was needed more than was Paul when God permitted him to be arrested in Caesarea. Yet year after year Paul was permitted to languish in prison. Had he been free, he could have done a mighty work for God and the church. It looked as though the work of God was greatly hindered and that it might even go to pieces without him; and still God kept him in prison. He may have been set at liberty for a little while after his second imprisonment, but it was not for long. He was again imprisoned, and at last died the death of a martyr.

Why Permitted?

Why did God permit this? It seemed to be the supreme tragedy of the age. Two reasons come to mind. There may be others. If the earlier epistles of Paul are compared with the later ones, a definite difference will be seen. The epistles of Galatians and Romans are masterpieces of rhetoric and logic.

Romans has been likened to a cathedral, and rightly so. It is majestic, imposing, glorious, a monument to a mighty mind imbued with the Spirit of God. We could not do without Romans. Its tremendous themes thrill us as we contemplate them. Romans was written in the providence of God, for a specific purpose, and its loss to the church would be almost fatal.

So with Galatians. In its setting forth of the uselessness of attempting to be saved by law, it is unique. It made a Christian church out of a Jewish church, and proclaimed freedom throughout the land. Misunderstood as it is by many, it yet is the guiding star for those who would understand the work that Christ came to do, and the position and intent of the law.

But wonderful and needful as these epistles are, there is something lacking in them which we find in the later ones. All his life Paul had prayed that he might be permitted to know Christ, "and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Philippians 3: 10, 11. He wanted to "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." Colossians 1:24.

He was given that privilege when he was sent to prison. He suffered, was cold and hungry. (Colossians 4:3, 4; 2 Timothy 4:13.) He was filling up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh. And it mellowed his spirit. Part of the time his prison was a dungeon in Rome. We would call it a cistern rather than a prison. From that hole in the ground issued some of the most sublime and sweetest truths of the gospel. Paul could never have written Philippians, or Ephesians, or Colossians unless and until he had passed through the deep experiences which he did in prison. Hear him writing under these conditions: 'Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do you joy, and rejoice with me.' Philippians 2:17, 18. "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." Philippians 4:4.

All his life Paul had been a diligent worker. He not only labored himself but made others work also. He had slight patience when Mark became homesick and left him. (Acts 15:36-41.) He had a sharp contention with Barnabas, so sharp that they separated. (Verse 39.) He had another tilt with Peter and "withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed." He accused him of dissimulation, and it appears that Paul was right. (Galatians 2:11-14.)

Any man who wanted to take his ease, or was unwilling to work hard, would not feel at home in Paul's company. He was the kind of man that was needed for that time, and he did the work which the Lord wanted him to do. There are times when men must be made to toe the mark, and Paul could make men do it. He was small of stature, but no one could run over him.

Paul was the man needed for the time. Some might even call him stern. But that is the kind some men need to make them work. Even in this matter Paul was a chosen vessel.

Getting Paul Ready for the Kingdom

But Paul in his own life needed a little more of the softening influence of the Spirit of God. This he received through his hard prison experiences. Year after year Paul became more like his Master. He had prayed for it, and it was granted him. He was filling up in his own flesh that which was behind the suffering of Christ.

Paul's imprisonment accomplished two things: It mellowed the spirit of Paul, put the finishing touches to a consecrated life and made him more like the Master; and it gave to the church such books as Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and the books of Timothy and Titus. What the early church lost in the imprisonment of Paul, the church throughout the ages gained in the wonderful, appealing epistles resulting from Paul's prison experience.

At times God puts men aside for a little while to do a work in and for them that cannot be done in any other way. So John the Baptist was imprisoned at the height of his career; John the revelator was confined to the Isle of Patmos; Moses was sent to the wilderness; Jeremiah was subjected to a series of imprisonments; Luther was confined in Wartburg; Bunyan was placed in jail; Christ was in the wilderness forty days. All these events have meant much to the men concerned. They have also meant much to the church.

God wants the leaven to leaven the whole lump, to transform the whole man. May God give us grace to let Him have His entire way with us. He wants to prepare us for the kingdom. He is doing His best to get us ready. He is even willing to lead us through hardships for our own good. It is for us to yield to the mighty working of His Spirit in us.

The parable of the leaven has caused much discussion as to the meaning of the three measures of meal. Some contend that the three measures stand for body, soul, and spirit; some, that it means the three sons of Noah; others, that it means Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles. Such reasoning illustrates the point that no parable is to be pressed beyond its obvious meaning. It is best to let all such interpretations alone. The three measures are merely incidental and have no bearing on the meaning of the parable. It was the usual amount needed for one baking. To attempt to make any spiritual or other application of this simple fact only causes confusion.

The Parables of the Treasure and of the Pearl

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hides, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he hath, and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Matthew 13:44-46.

The parable of the treasure again illustrates the point that no parable should be made to "go on all four," be pressed beyond its obvious meaning. In this parable the man discovers the treasure, hides it, and then goes and buys the field. If this part of the parable be pressed beyond its obvious intent, its morality might be questioned. What right has a man to hide a treasure after he has found it, deceive the owner as to its presence, and then buy the field from a man who presumably would not have sold it had he known that there was a treasure hid in it.

Such reasoning is beside the point. A parable is intended to teach one main lesson, and other points are brought in merely to give a setting to the story, and are not intended to teach spiritual or unspiritual truths.

Here many fail in their interpretation of parables. They attempt to find an application for every little point in the story, and thereby often miss the great lesson. In the parable of the woman sweeping her house to find the lost coin, some are much interested in what the broom might mean. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, some are interested in the supposed fact that people in heaven and hell can see each other and talk together. In the parable of the sower, some are perplexed over the exact meaning of the thirty and sixty fold. In the parable of the mustard seed, some want to know in what sense the birds “lodge” in the tree.

Let this fact be emphasized: A parable is given to teach one main lesson; all else is secondary. We are not to attempt to find an application for every little thing that is mentioned in a parable.

It is so with the parable before us, that of the treasure hid in the field. The chief point, the chief lesson, lies in the fact that the man having found a great treasure was willing to sell all that he had to get possession of it.

This is a most important lesson: it takes all to get the treasure. However much or little a man may have, he cannot buy it with a part of what he possesses. Unless he is willing to give all for the treasure, it cannot be his.

Not all people are willing to pay such a price. Some are willing to give much, but they are not willing to give all. They wish to keep some for themselves, but they also wish to have the treasure. This cannot be done.

This may be one reason why it is hard for the rich to enter heaven. They must give up so much. The poor give much less, yet they obtain the treasure. However, in either case it is not the amount that counts. It is not what is given but what is left which is reckoned. That is why the poor widow who gave her two mites is said to have given more than the rest. She gave all that she had.

It is not merely money that is meant when we are told that it takes all to get the treasure. It includes other cherished things of life. It is not possible to buy the treasure with what is left after we have acquired a few of the things of this life. Unless we consider the treasure worth all that is asked for it, we are unworthy of it.

Is Life Worth While?

The first thing to consider, therefore, is whether the treasure, eternal life, is worth the price asked for it. If men are convinced that they are offered a great treasure at very little cost, they will not hesitate to buy it. Let us therefore consider this question.

Eternal life is not a commodity that is sold and bought. We are not to consider religion from the viewpoint of getting something for little or nothing. Nevertheless, as the parable treats eternal life as something that is bought, let us consider it in the light of its value as related to its cost.

Is life worth while? This is a question which each must weigh and answer for himself. Many do not consider it worth while, and cut it short. Suicide is on the increase, and has been for years. Men and women tire of life, decide that it holds nothing for them, and blow out the candle. Of these there are tens of thousands every year.

However, most people cling to life and are loath to give it up. Even with the miserable existence that some lead---amid pain, filth, degradation, and shame---they cling to life. The majority of mankind consider life worth living, and would gladly prolong it beyond the natural span. Should a man invent a method of prolonging life, one year or ten, he would not lack patrons. There are those who would gladly give all that they have for a few added years.

If this is so, why is it that more people do not accept the offer of immortality promised in the gospel? If the majority of mankind vote that life is worth while; if they are willing to pay large sums here for a few added days or years, why is the gospel invitation rejected, when it offers the very thing they want? For this there are several reasons.

First, the salesmen of the kingdom, the preachers, have not always done good work in explaining and making clear what heaven or the new earth has to offer. They themselves are somewhat hazy as to conditions in the future life; they are not sure as to the reality of things. If asked whether we are to be real beings in heaven, whether we shall know each other there, whether there will be family life, they are not certain of their ground. Such questions as: What will occupy the time of the saints in the future life? Will they have bodies, or will they be immaterial spirits? Will they build houses and live in them, plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them? have been answered in a way that has left the questioner in doubt as to whether the preacher knows much about that of which he is trying to convince others. No real estate salesman here on earth would attempt to sell his customers a property of which he knows as little as some preachers know about the hereafter.

A Theological Conception of Heaven

The current theological conception that heaven is a place where every day is Sunday, where people always go to church, where everything is spiritual in the sense that it is unreal, is not very attractive. To sit down in the shade of a tree only to find that it is a “spiritual” tree with no shade; to attempt to pluck the fruit of a tree only to find that the hand holds nothing, that there is no substance to the fruit and that it vanishes as it is approached. To pluck a flower and to have nothing; to be only a spirit hovering around without a body, communing with other like disembodied and unclothed spirits. To go to church a million years or ten; in fact, to spend eternity with no work to do, no mission, but only a purposeless existence that leads nowhere, does not appeal to people and is not calculated to imbue them with a spirit to give all to get to such a place. If preachers are to “sell” heaven to men, they must know more about the place themselves and present it in a more attractive light.

Let I be misunderstood, let me hasten to remark that I believe in a world to come, that the Bible very definitely speaks of it, and that we do not need to make it crassly material to make it attractive. For a Biblical description of the life to come I refer the reader to the chapter in this book entitled “The Hereafter.”

One reason why some are not attracted by a promise of a life to come is that the preachers have not presented the future in such a way as to make it attractive. Another reason, as we see it, is that the motives appealed to for making heaven their choice have not always been worthy ones. Too often there has been a threat in the background. The ordinary, right-thinking man believes that right is right and wrong is wrong, and that neither threats of punishment nor hope of reward should influence his choice. He does not like to be frightened into heaven or coerced into making a choice. And this many preachers have attempted. There are still those who maintain that the preaching of hell is the most effective way of getting men into heaven. Such must have forgotten the cross, and also the statement that if Christ be lifted up, He will draw all men to Him. It must ever be the love of God that leads to repentance. Men can be led, but the right kind of men cannot be driven. A gospel whose chief weapon is fear will and should perish from the earth. Christ is a shepherd who leads the sheep, not a slave driver who lashes his own. Heaven will be filled only by those who have been attracted.

Some will wonder whether we can still believe in the old teaching of heaven as a place of reward and hell as a place of punishment, and whether these ought to be preached to the people. To this there is only one answer: There is a heaven for the righteous, and there is a place of punishment for the wicked, and these ought to be preached and presented to the people clearly and distinctly. The preacher who does not do this, does not do his duty. But these subjects ought not to be presented as a chief, motivating power in causing men to decide in favor of the gospel. The child who does what he is told because father stands over him with a rod; the child who does what he is told because he knows he will get a piece of candy as a reward, is not motivated by high ideals. Christianity does not need to appeal to such motives to get men to decide for Christ.

When the future life is presented rightly to the people, as the Bible portrays it, those who love life will decide that they cannot afford to miss the future life with all its privileges and opportunities. Life here is precious. In view of what the Bible has to say of the future, it is not necessary to threaten men to accept of the offer of immortality. Hell-fire needs to be preached, but not as a motive of choice.

I have already referred the reader to the chapter "The Hereafter" for a Bible description of what the future life will be. Let him read this chapter, let him read other passages in the Word not there quoted, and then let him decide whether life as Jesus promises it is worth what it costs. Suffice it here to say that if the future life is such as is described in the Bible, no one can afford to miss out on it. Too many are having difficulty and sorrow here in this world. Too many are ground down under oppression, every day being a burden. The God of heaven has prepared something better for all who will accept it. If life here has been a disappointment in some or in many respects, there is a promise of a better life to come. It will cost something, it will cost much; it will cost all. But it is well worth infinitely more than it costs.

The Parable of the Pearl

The parable of the pearl of great price contains practically the same lesson as the parable of the treasure hid in the field. In both cases the one who found the prize sold all that he had and obtained the desired possession.

The difference in the parables lies in this, that in the case of the treasure hid in the field the man came upon it unawares. He did not know it was there. In the case of the merchantman there was a deliberate search for a pearl. He was "in the market." He already had some pearls, but he was not satisfied. He had not as yet found the one he was after. When he did find it he gladly gave up the others for the one pearl of great price.

There is some good in most religions. There is some good in most denominations. Some denominations have a hard time to justify their existence; some hold to peculiar views founded neither on the Bible nor on common sense; but despite this there is some good, much good, in them.

Such as are looking for greater light are represented by the merchantman seeking the one great pearl. There are people belonging to sects that have done and are doing much good in the earth. But they are not satisfied where they are. They are looking for something better. They are looking for the one great pearl. And someday it will dawn on such that the simple expedient of deciding to follow the Master, casting aside all other allegiances, will result in an experience that will cause them gladly to resign all to follow Jesus. I have mentioned in another place that the time will come when all true Christians, wherever found, will rally round the banner that will summon Christians of all creeds to gather to the defense of the faith that is threatened with extinction by the inroads of skepticism and criticism in modern garb. We are nearing the time when the call will sound, when it must sound. Not all Christians will be persuaded to join this or that church, but they can and will be persuaded to rally about the faith of Jesus. And this is enough. We need no other creed. The faith of Jesus embraces all we ought to believe, and it omits nothing. On such a creed all true Christians can and will unite.

The Net

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto 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: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Matthew 13:47-50.

This is the last of the parables of the kingdom as recorded by Matthew. It deals with the same subject as the parable of the tares, and concerns those who are members of the church.

We learn from this parable what we also learn by observation that not all that are in the church are what they should be. There are some “of every kind,” some good and some bad. They have all been drawn in by the net, and together they constitute the visible church on earth.

It is clear that not all that are in the church are saints. Some have the idea that membership in the church helps, if it does not assure, salvation. Let such be undeceived. No one is saved merely because he is a member of the church. In the “End of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Verses 49, 50.

Let it be noted that the judgment here brought to view is not the judgment of the good on the one side and the wicked on the other. It is the judgment of the good and the bad in the church. It concerns those that have been drawn in by the gospel net. Not all who have thus been caught will be saved. There will be an examination, and only those who stand the test will finally be secure. This point has been stressed in another parable—the parable of the man without the wedding garment.

The Man Without the Wedding Garment

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then said he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go you therefore into the highways, and as many as you shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he said unto him, Friend, how came thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.” Matthew 22:2-14.

In this parable we are chiefly interested in the wedding garment. A man had slipped into the feast who did not have the wedding garment on. This was inexcusable, for on such occasions the garment was generally provided free to all guests. The other guests had on wedding garments, and as they were gathered from the highway, it cannot be supposed that they had wedding garments of their own. But this man had no wedding garment on, and yet he was among the guests. There can be only one conclusion: he had refused it. He wanted to come to the feast, but he wanted to lay down the conditions on which he would come. This the king could not permit.

It is not fair to force oneself into a place, or demand to be permitted to stay in a place, while violating the rules in force. The man in the parable could have stayed out. He need not have accepted the invitation. But if he did accept, he should abide by the rules.

If a person goes to a place of worship, he should show reverence for the place, or stay away. The principle is not changed because the person does not believe in that particular kind of worship. If a person asks for admittance to an institution, he thereby pledges himself to the observance of the rules of that institution. He has no right to demand entrance on his own conditions.

Many people would like to do this with reference to religion. They wish to be saved; they wish to come to the feast; but it must be on their own conditions. This God cannot accept. He would like to have them come. He invites them to come. He furnishes not only the feast but also the garments that He wishes each to wear. All may come; all are urged to come; but they must be governed by the rules God lays down.

We need not point out that the garment the Lord wants all to wear is the spotless garment of His own righteousness, which is furnished to all freely. To refuse the garment, to neglect to wear it, is an insult to God. For any to come to the feast and yet refuse to put on the garment can be construed in no other light than willful contempt.

The Lesson of This Parable

The lesson that is impressed in this parable is that we are to accept God's conditions of salvation, and not lay down conditions of our own. God's conditions are clear and distinct. They are not difficult to fulfill. The garment which He demands that we wear, He provides. All we need to do is to put it on.

Isaiah speaks of some who wish to be called by God's name and yet wish to wear their own garments. “In that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.” Isaiah 4:1. This text is capable of several interpretations. All I wish to call attention to is the fact that these women, symbolic of churches, state that they will eat their own bread and wear their own garments, “only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.” They wish the name, but do not wish the garment. This is true of many.

“When the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he said unto him, Friend, how came thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.” Matthew 22:11,12.

The idea of judgment pervades the parable. When the king appears, it is not to sit down with the guests, but to see that all is well, and that all have the wedding garments on. He finds one who has neglected this important matter, and the result is, not that he is given a garment and told to put it on, but that he is bound and cast into the outer darkness. This is nothing less than judgment.

This parable is closely related to the parable of the net in which all kinds of fish are caught, and afterward the bad thrown out. It is also related to the parable of the man who found tares among the wheat and counseled that they be permitted to grow together

until the harvest. Though of a somewhat different nature, the parable of the ten virgins teaches the same lesson. In the parable under discussion a parallel situation exists. The one who is without the wedding garment is not on the outside. He is within the festal hall; he is mingling with those who are clothed as they should be. He is expected to have on the garment, and it is at a late hour when he is found out.

The Ten Virgins

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes; go you out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go you rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man comes.” Matthew 25:1-13.

The parable of the ten virgins teaches the lesson that those who wait for the Lord must be prepared to wait longer than they expected, and that they must have extra oil, or their lamps will go out. There are several minor lessons: those who took extra oil have only enough for themselves, and hence cannot help the others; willingness to go and get oil is not sufficient they must have it; and some will knock on the door when it is too late. The main lesson, however, is as stated.

It will be noted that this parable begins with the word then. Jesus had just given His memorable discourse about His second coming, as recorded in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew. He had told of the signs that show that the day is nearing, and had ended by telling of the wise servant who gives his household meat in due season, and of the evil servant who says that the Lord delays His coming. He had stated that the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of.” Matthew 24:50.

At that point the parable of the ten virgins appears, beginning with the word then. This has specific reference to the time when the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven is near.

Notice that in the beginning there is not much difference between the wise and the foolish virgins. They all went out to meet the bridegroom; they all had lamps. They all had oil in the lamps; the lamps were all burning (note the marginal reading in verse eight, where the foolish virgins say not that their lamps have gone out but that they are going out); all the virgins slept; they all awoke. Thus far there is no difference. The difference comes in the fact that the wise had an extra supply of oil; they were prepared for an emergency, and were ready to enter in when the bridegroom came.

There are many people who get along very well until an emergency arises. They can adjust themselves to the ordinary routine of life, but anything unusual throws them off balance, as it were. They do not have that little something extra which it takes to pull through an unusual situation. They are not prepared for what may come.

An Extra Infilling

Something extra is demanded of those who are living in or near the time of the Lord's appearing. They need an extra infilling of the Holy Spirit-the oil; they need to be prepared for delay; they need to be ready to spring to their feet at a moment's notice to meet the unusual; they must be God's minutemen. Because the five wise virgins had an extra supply of oil in the vessels with their lamps, they were ready for the bridegroom. They were prepared for just such an emergency.

The five foolish virgins also went out to meet the bridegroom. They expected Him to come and were sure that He would come before their oil had been consumed. They had not set a definite time for Him to come, but they were sure that He would not tarry beyond the time for which they had made preparation. The wise, on the other hand, were prepared for a lodger wait. The bridegroom might come as soon as the others expected, but He might tarry; and for this they wanted to be prepared. It was not lack of faith that made them believe that the Lord might tarry longer than the others expected. They were ready if the Lord should come in the first watch, but they did not want to be unprepared if He should tarry until the second or the third. They heeded the admonition: “Occupy till I come.”

The Chief Lesson

The chief lesson, therefore, of the parable of the ten virgins is that all be prepared to meet the Lord whenever He comes. “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man comes.” Matthew 25:13. He might come as soon as the foolish virgins expected Him, but He might also tarry. The parable brings to view the fact that He tarried, that He did not come as soon as some expected Him. Because He tarried, some began to smite their fellow servants and to eat and drink with the drunken. (Matthew 24:49.) Others used the tarrying time in doing God's work. When He at last came the wise had oil in their lamps and oil in their vessels. They were not taken unawares.

The parables just considered present the common teaching that at some time there will be a division, a separation, within the church of those who are ready and those who are not ready to meet the King. This separation takes place immediately before the final

events occur. In the parable of the tares the separation takes place “in the time of harvest.” Matthew 13:30. In the parable of the fish, “at the end of the world.” Matthew 13:49. In the parable of the virgins, at the time of the coming of the bridegroom. (Matthew 25:6.) In the parable of the man without the wedding garment, at the time of God's marriage feast for His Son. (Matthew 22:2.) All these expressions have reference to the time of the coming of the Son of man, the second coming of Christ.

The Talents

“The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and dug in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants comes, and reckons with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou delivered unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou delivered unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou has not sown, and gathering where thou has not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth. Lo, there thou has that is your. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed. Thou ought therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For 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. And cast you the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Matthew 25:14-30.

This parable shows that all men do not have equal ability, but that according to their talents they will have to give account. The lesson is that we must use, and improve upon, the talents we have, and that, whether we have one or five, the Lord expects us to give Him back His own with usury.

Some people are not interested in improving what talents they have. They are satisfied to remain as they are. But the very intent of life is to demonstrate what we shall do with that which, is given us, what we shall do with life. As we improve our talents we enlarge our life and our enjoyment. In improving our talents we also enlarge our capacity for helping others, we become more useful to them, we are enabled to serve better. Those who refuse to improve their talents refuse to that extent to enlarge their capacity for service. They demonstrate that they are unwilling to help others except to the extent of the original talent for possession of which they are not responsible. They show that as far as they are concerned they have not and will not take a single step to enlarge their capacity for service. In taking such an attitude they show their unfitness for membership in the kingdom. All that belong to His kingdom must serve and be anxious to do so.

The improvement of the talents that have been bestowed upon us determines our fitness for life and shows our appreciation of it. He who does not return to the Lord His own with usury is an unprofitable servant; his original talent will be taken away from him, and he will be consigned to outer darkness.

Sins of Omission

The parable of the talents deals with sins of omission rather than sins of commission. It also shows that God not only holds a man responsible for what he does but for what he might have done had he improved the talents given him. The man with the one talent was not accused of having committed any overt sin. He had merely neglected opportunities of improving his talent. He was condemned not for what he was but for what he might have been, not for what he did but for what he might have done. He was slothful, lazy. And being slothful, he was wicked.

This parable therefore teaches that it is the duty of every person to develop such talents as he may possess to the best of his ability. When a crisis comes it is not enough for a man to say that he is not prepared, that he does not have the ability to cope with conditions. God will judge him, not by what he is able to do, but by what he might have been able to do had he improved his opportunities instead of wasting them.

This is most serious. It places a definite responsibility on each to do all in his power to improve every opportunity that comes in his way, or better still, to see to it that opportunities come his way. It is probably true that we have not begun to appreciate what it is possible for the human mind and body to accomplish when all powers are put to the stretch. We need to learn our responsibility for improving whatever talents we have, and not bury them in a napkin. It is a fearful thought that we are responsible not only for what we are, but for what we might be. We need to pray God to forgive the past with all its failures, and to press forward to the mark of our high calling in Christ Jesus.

26. The Ordinances

Baptism

BY ORDINANCES I mean those outward rites which Christ instituted or appointed to be administered in His church as the outward, visible signs of an inward state of grace.

Among these rites is that of baptism, an ordinance which was in use before the time of Christ, but which He adapted to His purpose and made an entrance into the church. If it be thought strange that Christ should adopt an ordinance which was already in use, it is enough to point out that Christ never rejected that which had abiding value. Prayer, reading of the Word, preaching, prophesying—these were all in operation before Christ came to this earth. He abolished none of them, but rather magnified their use. It might also be remarked that such ordinances as Jesus recognized, had their origin either in the Word itself or in a command from God otherwise communicated.

That Jesus recognized baptism as approved of Heaven is evident from the question which He asked of the chief priests and elders: “The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?” Matthew 21:25. The clear indication is that Jesus recognized the Baptist's commission as a direct command from God, in harmony with John's own statement that God had sent him “to baptize with water.” John 1: 33. This puts God's seal of approval on the ordinance.

Jesus, however, did more than approve John's baptism. He gave definite command to His disciples as to the administration of this rite, and broadened the command to take in the whole world. “Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” Matthew 28:19, 20.

Peter agrees with this when he says, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Acts 2:38.

Paul bears this testimony: “Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” Romans 6:3-5. “You are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: in whom also you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” Colossians 2:10-12.

When any ordinance or ceremony is claimed to be binding on the Christian, it is always well to inquire whether it is approved of or commanded by Christ, and if He Himself observed it. In this case the command is clear: “Go you therefore. . . baptizing them.” This applies to “all nations,” and therefore exempts none.

Christ's Baptism

Did Christ Himself observe this ordinance? Did He subject Himself to baptism? The record is clear in this respect also. Christ was baptized by John in Jordan. “Then comes Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comes thou to me? and Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Matthew 3:13-17.

The story of Christ's baptism is very instructive. When Jesus came to be baptized of John, John remonstrated: I have need to be baptized of thee, and comes thou to me? “John recognized in Jesus a person who did not need to repent and renounce His sins, as did the others whom he was admonishing to repent. He saw in Him the sinless Lamb of God, the One who “takes away the sin of the world.” Why should He need to be baptized? John felt that it would be fitter if Jesus baptized him. Jesus did not argue the question, but merely said, “Suffer it to be so now.” Then He added the meaningful words: “Thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness.” When John heard this he was satisfied and proceeded with the baptism.

These last words are significant. Jesus did not need to be baptized for the remission of sins. He had no sin. Yet He decided to be baptized, because thus “it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness”; that is, as a matter of example, if for no other reason, He wanted John to baptize Him. If Jesus had not been baptized, some might think the ordinance of doubtful value and authority. With the example of Jesus' baptism there can be no doubt as to our duty. Jesus was baptized. He is our example. It is for us to follow in His footsteps.

That baptism is not an ordinance that may be omitted if one feels so inclined, is clear from Mark's report of the saying of Jesus. “He said unto them, Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” Mark 16:15, 16. In view of the reading of this text it is evident that baptism cannot lightly be omitted by one who claims to follow the Lord.

Mode of Baptism

In baptism, some churches practice immersion; others, sprinkling; others, pouring. Some baptize only persons who have come to years of accountability; others include little children. Some immerse the candidates forward; some, backward. Some dip them once; others, three times. The question may therefore rightly be raised, Which is the right mode of baptizing?

In this, as in all other Biblical questions, we have only one appeal: the Bible. If that gives no information or instruction, we may conclude that we can follow our best judgment. If, however, the Bible speaks, there is only one thing to do: follow the instructions laid down in Holy Writ. There is no other safe way.

The Greek word used to describe baptism is baptizo. The lexicons invariably give its meaning to be that of dipping, plunging in, immersing. It is so used in the New Testament as well as in classical literature. Abundant testimony could be adduced to support this view, but as this is generally conceded, no additional testimony need be given.

In the matter of the mode of baptism we may consult the Bible and the example of Christ. These are the final authority in all questions of religion.

We therefore need only to discover how baptism was performed in the days of Christ and the apostles. It may be presumed that the apostles knew how baptism should be administered, and that those who were associated with Jesus would perform the rite as Jesus would have it done. If Jesus was sprinkled instead of baptized by immersion, if John administered baptism by that method, if Peter or James or Paul believed or taught sprinkling, there can remain no doubt in the mind of anyone that sprinkling is the right mode.

John's Baptism

Let us therefore consider examples of baptism as conducted in apostolic times and recorded in the New Testament.

Of the baptism of Jesus this is written: "Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him." Matthew 3:16. Mark adds that He "was baptized of John in Jordan." Mark 1: 9.

These statements indicate, if they do not clearly teach, that Jesus was baptized by immersion. If it should be said of a man that he was baptized in a lake, the obvious meaning would be that it was in the lake that the baptism took place, not on the shore or near the lake, but actually in the lake. No other meaning would be permissible. If Christ, therefore, was baptized in Jordan, it was not near Jordan or on its shore, but in Jordan.

That this understanding is correct we learn from the account in Matthew. It is there stated that Jesus, after His baptism, "He went up straightway out of the water."

As no one can come up "out of the water" who has not been down in the water, it is clear that Jesus went down into the water at the time of the baptism. Whoever wants to follow Jesus in the manner of baptism should therefore go down into the water as Jesus did.

John baptized near Salim, "because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized." John 3:23. If John baptized by sprinkling, it would seem strange that he should select a place because there was much water. It is difficult to believe that anyone can consider this text and come to any other conclusion than that the reason for John's baptizing where there was much water was that he needed water for baptism. It does not make sense to state, as some would have us believe, that John baptized where there was much water because he needed much water for drinking purposes. The evident meaning is that he baptized at that particular place because there was much water there for baptizing purposes. Any other meaning seems forced, unnatural, and adopted only for the purpose of bolstering up a particular teaching.

The Eunuch

An interesting story of baptism is told in the eighth chapter of Acts. Philip is talking with the eunuch who is returning to Ethiopia after a journey to Jerusalem. He explains to the eunuch the meaning of certain passages in Isaiah, and as they go on their journey the eunuch becomes convinced of the truth of the gospel and of his need of baptism. As they are passing a body of water, the eunuch says, "See, here is water; what does hinder me to be baptized?" Verse 36. To this Philip answers, if thou believes with all your heart, thou may." The eunuch replies, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing." Verses 37-39.

Note how emphatic is the statement in regard to the mode of baptism. If Inspiration merely intended to convey the idea that the eunuch was baptized, all that would be necessary would be to say what the last three words of verse 38 state: "He baptized him." But God evidently intended to tell just how the baptism was performed, and this He proceeds to do. He is not satisfied merely to state that Philip baptized the eunuch. He wants all to know that the baptism was performed by both men going into the water. This could have been clearly stated had the record said of Philip and the eunuch, "They went into the water, and he baptized him." But God was not satisfied even with that statement, clear as it is. He wanted to make sure that there should be no doubt about both of them going into the water. He knew that the time would come when men would say that it is not necessary for two to go into the water for the purpose of baptism. To make sure that all men should understand that true baptism demands that both the administrator and the candidate go into the water, God emphatically states, "They went ... both into the water.... and he baptized Him."

But God is not yet satisfied. There must remain no doubt as to the fact that the two men went into the water; so God adds another phrase containing one more both. Note how it now reads: "They went ... both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him." The wording seems almost superfluous. But it is put there for a definite purpose. God wants to make sure that it is understood that in true baptism both the administrator and the candidate go into the water. By the twice use of the word both this is made doubly sure.

But God has yet another word which He wants added. He inserts the word down,, so that the complete statement now reads, "They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

To all this God adds another statement: "And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing." Thus God once more calls attention to the fact that they both went down into the water by stating, "When they were come up out of the water."

That completes the story. God cannot make it clearer. In New Testament baptism the administrator and the candidate both go down into the water.

This baptism was performed under the direct leading of the Spirit of God. With the definite wording in regard to the mode of baptism; with the use of repetitions to emphasize the idea that both men went down into the water; with the added statement that they both came up out of the water after the ceremony, this account provides an example of how baptism was and should be performed when conducted as God would have it.

The Symbolism of Baptism

Baptism is spoken of as a death and a resurrection. "Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." Romans 6:3-5.

"Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Colossians 2:12.

These texts state that baptism is a burial and a resurrection -a burial of the old man, a birth of the new. As a man in death is laid to rest in the tomb, so the believer goes down into the watery grave and there buries the old man with all that pertains to him. What is raised is a new creature in Christ Jesus. The believer is thus "buried with him by baptism into death." Romans 6:4. When Christ "died, he died unto sin." Verse 10. So likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin." Verse 11. We know that "if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." Verse 5.

These texts are plain, both in their literal application and in their symbolism. They liken baptism to a death and a resurrection. The old man dies and is buried, and the new man lives by the power of God. With this figure in mind there is no difficulty in understanding the mode and meaning of baptism. It is a death. It is a burial. As in real death a man is buried face upward, so in baptism. As in death a man is lowered into the grave, so in baptism a man is lowered into the water. As a man in death is hidden from sight when the earth covers the body, so in baptism the candidate disappears beneath the medium of immersion. The symbol of a death and burial is well chosen. It gives a complete figure and example for us to follow.

Symbolically, baptism stands for the washing away of sins. This is clearly taught in Ananias' statement to Saul: "Now why tarry thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Acts 22: 16. There is no virtue in the water as such to cleanse from sin, but baptism is symbolic of the cleansing power of the gospel; even as water serves to physical cleansing, so baptism serves to spiritual cleansing.

Through further inquiry into the meaning of this symbolism, it becomes evident that if baptism is to be an adequate symbol of cleansing from sin, it must be more than sprinkling. Sprinkling, as it is ordinarily administered, consists in touching the head with water. But it is not merely a part of the man that is to be baptized, any more than it is a part of the old man that is to be buried. It is the man, the whole man, that is to be baptized, not part of him. That is why the figure of death and burial is used to give a picture of the death and burial of the old man. And that is why Titus 3:5, in which baptism is spoken of as the "washing of regeneration," is translated in Young's Literal Translation, "He did save us, through a bathing of regeneration, and a renewing of the Holy Spirit," while the Emphasized New Testament says, "He saved us through means of the bathing of a new birth, and the molding anew of Holy Spirit." With this agrees the translation of Weymouth. Dean Alford says that the word used in Titus could never be translated "washing, as AM, which the word cannot mean by any possibility." He contends that it should be "laver," not washing, to which Lange, in his Critical Commentary, agrees and says that it has "reference to baptism, which might all the more easily be exhibited as a laver, loutron, since it was originally performed by the entire submersion of the person baptized."

Peter on Baptism

An interesting figure of baptism is mentioned in I Peter 3:20, 21, in which the apostle speaks of those who "sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

In the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing" eight souls "were saved by water." "The like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us." In the days of Noah the Flood came. There was a great deal of water at that time, so much so that "all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the water prevail; and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth, and every man: all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died." Genesis 7:19-22.

"The like figure whereunto even baptism." The water in the time of Noah covered all the hills, all the mountains, "fifteen cubits upward." This is a figure of baptism. Everything was covered with water. "All flesh died.... and every man: all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died." All the sinners died; only Noah and his family were left. All sin was rooted out, drowned. This is a figure of baptism, in which the old man dies and is buried.

If we take the figure of the Flood as symbolic of baptism, we do not get the idea that only a little water was used. There was a great deal of it. The water in the time of Noah covered everything, and 'all sinners and sin were drowned. At the time of Noah there was more water on the earth than there has been at any time since. And this water, God says, is a figure of baptism.

The one adequate figure of complete cleansing by water is a bath. We are sinful. We need a complete cleansing, not merely a sprinkling. The only satisfying symbol of what God does for the soul in cleansing from sin, is complete submersion in water, complete cleansing, much water, covering everything. Nothing less will do. Why should anyone be satisfied with having only part of the body baptized, when there is abundant provision for a complete work to be done?

One could continue this argument, but it is not necessary. God commands and demands baptism. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." Mark 16:16. With these words before us there is only one thing for the Christian to do. He must follow his Lord. But this should be done not as a matter of duty merely. It is a blessed privilege. He that is baptized may know of a surety that as certainly as he is baptized in faith, he will rise from the water with the assurance that every sin is forgiven, that he is a new creature, that all his sins have been cast into the sea, and that he is cleansed from sin. Such baptism is more than a duty, it is a most blessed opportunity which none should neglect. How can any omit that which the Lord Himself has instituted and which is so full of, promise? Sprinkling, pouring, or any other mode than the one which the Lord Himself approved and followed, is an inadequate and unworthy symbol of what the Lord will do for the soul.

A Significant Ordinance

There are few more exalted passages in the Bible than verses 3-5 of the thirteenth chapter of John. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he rises from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he pours water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded."

Christ knew "that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God." Verse 3. It was in the full knowledge of His divinity and of His possession of all power that He stooped to take the towel, the water, and the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet. The setting is such that we cannot fail to get from the wording the plain intent of the writer, that in this act Christ went the entire distance in humble service. He became a servant indeed. He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28.

A few days previous to this, Jesus had made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The people had hailed Him as the coming King. "A very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." Matthew 21:8-11.

Following this He had cleansed the Temple and had done wonderful things," and even the children were "crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David." Matthew 21:15. Never before had Jesus permitted Himself to be adored. Now He accepted their homage without question, even defending it when the chief priests and the scribes wanted Him to halt the demonstration. (Verses 16,17)

The disciples were much encouraged by Jesus' attitude. For a long time they had wanted the Master to declare Himself. They had known that He was the Teacher sent from God; and now they were persuaded that He was the Messiah. They were waiting for Him to establish the kingdom of which He had spoken so much; but He was strangely hesitant. Now, however, it seemed that the time had come. He had entered Jerusalem as a king, He had received the acclamation of the people, He had cleansed the Temple, and now He had called a meeting at which only the twelve were to be present. Not even a servant was at hand. Surely, some important communication would be forthcoming. Each sought the highest place at the table and expectantly awaited developments.

But Jesus made no move. He seemed to be waiting for something. The expectancy became painful. It dawned on the disciples that Jesus was waiting for the customary service of cleanliness, the washing of the feet. But there was no servant present. Who was to do it? Each was very sure that he would not do it. This was no time to make a servant of oneself when so great issues were at stake. The kingdom was doubtless to be established. They were all looking for the highest place, not for that of a servant. James and John had been trying to take advantage of the rest by getting their mother to help them. She had come and asked for the two highest places in the kingdom for her sons, "one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom." Matthew 20:21. At this, "when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren." Verse 24. The disciples were going to make sure that no such unjust advantage was taken of them again, and they had no idea of taking a servant's place. Least of all Judas. He had managed to get the place nearest Jesus at the table; John was on the other side.

Jesus Waited

Jesus waited as long as He could. Then He rose from the table, laid aside His garments, took a towel, poured water into a basin, and began to wash the feet of the disciples. They were filled with astonishment, and could hardly believe their eyes. Surely the Master did not know what He was doing. It was so preposterous that there must be some mistake about it. They had not imagined that the problem would be solved in this way. They had doubtless thought that in the absence of a servant, Jesus would designate one of them to take the servant's place; and each could think of one or more of the others who would be much benefited by being made to serve the rest.

Their astonishment at Jesus' performance was so genuine that for a time they were speechless. Even Peter had nothing to say until it came his turn to be served by the Master. As Jesus knelt at the feet of Peter preparing to wash the disciple's feet, Peter could stand it no longer. In perplexity he exclaims, "Does thou wash my feet?" It seemed so unbelievable and unreal that Peter could

hardly believe his own eyes. "Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knows not now; but thou shall know hereafter." John 13:6, 7. Peter by this time had recovered himself, saw the incongruity of the situation, and exclaimed, "Thou shall never wash my feet." Verse 8. To this Jesus quietly answered, if I wash thee not, thou has no part with me."

These words are full of meaning. "If I wash thee not, thou has no part with me." No part with Jesus? No; unless I wash thee, thou has no part with Me. No part? What does that mean? Jesus was about to institute the Lord's supper. In a little while He would give them the bread and the wine, His body and blood. But "if I wash thee not, thou has no part with me." No part in the supper? No part in the kingdom? No, no part with Me. If it were only the ordinary washing of the feet, Peter would have known exactly what Jesus was doing. There was no mystery about it. Jesus was washing his feet, that was all. But Jesus had something else in mind. I am doing something that you do not now understand," Jesus had said, "but later you will understand it." What might this be?

A Higher Cleansing

There can be no doubt that Jesus was here speaking of a cleansing higher than that of washing of the feet. Else why should He state that they did not understand what He was doing? Else why should He state that unless He did this for Peter he would have no part with Him? But if we believe that Jesus used this service as symbolic of a higher cleansing, all is clear. And we do believe that this is the intent of the incident.

The disciples were full of jealousy and dissension when they came into the chamber. How could Jesus make them see their condition? The service He did for them accomplished this work. When they saw Jesus washing their feet, they were filled with shame. Each knew that he ought to do what Jesus was doing. Each knew that he did not love his brethren as he should. When they saw Jesus take the place of a servant, their pride was humbled, and they were ready to take any place which He assigned them. As Jesus knelt before them and washed their feet, He at the same time washed from their hearts all the evil jealousy and envy which had possessed them.

When at last it dawned upon Peter what Jesus was doing, he exclaimed, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." The words of Jesus, that Peter could have no part with the Lord "if I wash thee not," had sunk into his consciousness. If Jesus' service was that important, why not include the hands and the head? To this Jesus answered, "He that is washed needs not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and you are clean, but not all." Verse 10. It is clear from these words that Jesus has spiritual cleansing in mind, for they were now all clean except Judas. "For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, You are not all clean." Verse 11. Judas' sin was not bodily uncleanness. It was the state of his heart. It is to this kind of uncleanness that Jesus refers.

We need not here go exhaustively into the meaning of the statement that "he that is washed needs not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." As baptism is a bath, and symbolic of spiritual regeneration and cleansing, so the service which Jesus performed for the disciples had spiritual significance. Both were symbolic of cleansing, "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God." I Peter 3:21.

If You Know These Things

After Jesus had finished washing the feet of the disciples, He took His garments, and sat down, and said to them: "Know you what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done unto you. Verily, Verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If you know these things, happy are you if you do them." John 13:12-17.

There are churches that observe this ordinance, believing that Jesus meant to institute this service as a religious requirement, and that the words quoted justify them in this belief. There are others who admit that the lesson Christ taught is much needed, but that the record in the thirteenth chapter of John does not constitute a requirement. Let us consider this.

There can be no disputing that the words, if I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet," are definite. 'You also ought.' Ought is a strong word. The statement is not 'You must,' but 'You ought.' It is left for the conscience to do this or not. But if a Christian should ask Christ, "Must I wash my brother's feet?" Christ would answer, 'You ought to do it.' The Christian will naturally take the position that what Christ thinks he ought to do, he will do.

If any think that such a service is too humiliating, Christ wants us to know that "the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him." Verse 16. And so far from this being a sorrowful, depressing ordinance, "if you know these things, happy are you if you do them." Verse 17.

Taking all these statements into consideration, we incline to the belief that the example Christ has given was meant to be binding on Christians, and that this ordinance is really a preparatory one for what is generally termed the Lord's supper.

While we are thinking of the outward form of the ordinance, we must not forget that this, as well as all other ordinances, is capable of misuse. The one who kneels before a brother to wash his feet as a church ordinance, and does not consider this a pledge of his willingness to do other lowly service for his brother, fails to get the lesson which Christ wishes to teach him. Whoever takes part in the service thereby solemnly covenants with God that he will be willing to consider others better than himself. If the ordinance is done only for show-as is the case in one church, where the supreme head once a year touches the feet of carefully selected individuals with water-it ceases to be an ordinance and becomes sacrilege. God looks to the heart.

The Lord's Supper

Jesus instituted the Lord's supper immediately after the events mentioned in the thirteenth chapter of John which we have just considered. '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: for I say unto you, I will not any more cat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. 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.

Paul records the events this way: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do you, as oft as you drink, in remembrance of me. For as often as you cat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till he come. 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 cat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." I Corinthians 11:23-30.

The Lord's supper is celebrated by most Christian churches. This is right and according to Christ's command. Christ Himself instituted the ordinance. As we eat the bread and drink the cup, we become partakers of His body and blood, partakers of His suffering, and also of His life.

This Is My Body

There has been much dispute whether the bread is really the body, and the cup really the blood, of the Lord. This seems unnecessary. When Christ took the bread, saying, "This is my body," He was still in the flesh, He still had His body. It is not conceivable that Jesus would be in the body and also hold His body in His hand. If the bread is literally the body of the Lord, then Christ had two bodies, for He took the bread and held it in His hand at the very time He was still in the body. But such cannot be. If I have a picture on the wall and someone asks, 'Who is that?' and I answer, 'That is my uncle,' there is no doubt as to what I mean. Christ standing with the bread in His hand gives it to the disciples and says, "This is my body." Do we therefore need to take the same position as did the Jews when on another occasion they "strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" John 6:52. The bread and the wine are emblematic of the body and the blood of the Lord. They are symbols. Only a person who adores or worships these emblems instead of the Creator will have any difficulty with the plain meaning of these statements.

We need, however, to be careful lest we consider these emblems as common bread and wine. They are emblems, they are symbols, and as such are not to be put to common use but are to be considered worthy of dignified respect. The baptismal water is ordinary water used for a specific purpose. It is not "holy" water, it is not to be worshiped or adored, neither is it to be contaminated. The wine and bread used in the celebration of the ordinances is dedicated bread and wine. It is symbolic of the broken body and spilled blood of the Lord. It is not to be carelessly handled; even the leftovers are to be carefully disposed of. This, however, does not mean that we are to worship the bread and wine. Christ Himself would have been most perplexed had any worshiped the bread which He gave the disciples. Had any at that time claimed that it was His real body, He would have wondered how they could believe such when He stood right before them.

There is life and light in the ordinances as the Lord instituted them. Also, as stated before, there is' danger in their misuse. Of this Paul says: 'Wherefore whosoever shall cat 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 cat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." I Corinthians 11:27-30.

These are serious words. It is no light matter to eat and drink damnation to oneself. There are some Christians who absent themselves from the ordinances of the Lord's house. This should not be done. These ordinances are meant to be a blessing, and no Christian can afford to neglect them. Yet, according to these words, caution should be exercised. No one must eat or drink unworthily. For this reason, "Let a man examine himself."

The New Covenant

To take the bread, to eat it, is a most solemn thing. It is the new covenant. As a person takes the bread, the broken body of the Lord, he enters into a solemn covenant with God that he will follow the Lamb whither so ever He goes, be it Gethsemane or Golgotha; that if need be he is willing to have his body broken as was Christ's. As he eats the bread it becomes a part of his body, or rather, as he cats the bread he becomes a partaker of the Lord's body. The bread, the Lord's body, becomes identified with his own body. But the Lord's body is the broken body, "broken for you." Symbolically, the bread becomes "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Christ and the believer are one.

But this is not all. The ordinances embrace the cup as well as the bread. No one can ever fulfill the terms of the covenant in his own strength. For this reason the Lord has given us the cup, which is also a part of the new covenant. As the life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11), so the life of the Redeemer is symbolically in the cup. "This cup is the new testament in my blood." That life, that cup, the Christian takes. By the life that is in the blood, even the life of Christ, the believer enters into covenant with God. Not in his

own strength but in the strength of the blood of the new covenant which he receives in the cup, does he enter into covenant relation with God. Any Lord's supper at which the communicant does not partake of both emblems, is faulty. The cup as well as the bread must be used. Only in the strength of both can the covenant be carried out.

As we take the bread, the broken body of the Lord, do we really accept that body with all that is implied in its acceptance? Are we willing to follow the Lord? Are we willing to become blood brothers of the Lord, partakers of His sufferings as well as of His glory? Are we willing to stoop to help the lowest; are we willing as He was, to humble ourselves and become obedient, even unto death? Are we willing to kneel before our brethren and do for them the lowest service? Are we willing to take any place, however humble it may be, and thus follow the Master? Are we willing to do what Jesus did to take the towel and the basin? Than the towel nothing is more symbolic of service, of ministry, of humility. Are we ready to go with Him all the way? If so, let us show it by our works. Christ took the towel, He stooped before the brethren, even before Peter, and John, and Judas. Are we willing to follow? If we are, there can never be in our hearts any strife for the highest place. If we in humility do what Christ taught us as an example, He will say to us as He did to the disciples, "You are clean." With this assurance we can partake of the bread, we can drink of the cup. Thus we can enter into covenant relation with Christ, we can have the assurance of sins forgiven, of cleansing. Thus the ordinances of the Lord's house will take on new significance and glory, we shall in a more intimate way follow the Master, and we shall have the blessed assurance of His divine presence in our lives.

There are greater blessings for us in the celebration of the ordinances of the Lord's house than we have yet experienced. What more or higher joy can mortal man conceive than to be invited to the table of the Lord, to sit at meat with Him? Of the cup Jesus says, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Matthew 26:29. For that day the church is longing. For that day Jesus is longing. The church can only pray that the day may not be long delayed. "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he comes shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." Luke 12:37.

27. The Fatherhood Of God

CHRIST spoke more fully on the subject of the Father than on any other. For this there is good reason. In Christ's day-as in our own many misconceptions prevailed about the Father. It was needful that the world be enlightened in regard to the true character of God. Christ came to give the world a revelation of the Father that men might know what God is like.

An illuminating passage concerning this subject is found in the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. Christ, in speaking to Philip, says, if you had known me, you should have known my Father also: and from henceforth you know him, and have seen him." John 14:7. Evidently Philip did not fully understand Christ's meaning, for he exclaims, "Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us." Verse 8. With gentle rebuke Christ answers, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet has thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how says thou then, Show us the Father?" Verse 9.

According to this statement, Christ and the Father are one so completely that to see one is to see the other also. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." According to the Bible no man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." John 1: 18. As the Father is "King eternal, immortal, invisible," whom no man hath seen, nor can see," it is not to be wondered at that men do not know Him and do not understand Him. (I Timothy 1: 17; 6:16.) For this reason it became necessary for Christ to come to this world to reveal the Father. This He did perfectly.

Of the heavenly trio, none has been so misunderstood as the Father. This is true not only of past ages but of the present. The Son we know, for He came to this world and lived among us, and men had opportunity to observe Him. The Holy Spirit we also know, for He was manifested in power on the day of Pentecost and afterward, and has always been honored as the purveyor of God's power and blessing, a helper and a comforter. But the character of the Father has been so misunderstood that many think of Him as being unmerciful, vindictive, and cruel. He has been pictured as one who could never be satisfied until He had extracted the last farthing, one who is always on the watch to catch an unwary soul, and who would punish cruelly even little ones "not an ell long."

It is not many years ago that certain preachers took delight in presenting the plight of "a soul in the hands of an angry God." God's love was almost forgotten, and His strictness was magnified out of all proportion. Christ was presented as the One altogether lovely, the One to whom a sinner might flee in time of distress and find a refuge for the soul. But not so the Father. He was pictured as watching to find some charge against mankind, and found it altogether too often. Little children who did not sit still in church during the long sermons were sure to incur God's displeasure.

It was not for their own sins only that men would suffer. If parents neglected to have their children ordered according to the rules of the church, not only would the parents suffer, but the little ones would be thrown into hell, there to burn forever and ever, world without end, through no fault of their own. The justice of this did not appeal to the innate fairness of mankind.

In an age when men dared not think, much less speak, this doctrine of hell went largely unchallenged, though it did give men a horribly distorted picture of the Father. It created in men's minds a definite cleavage between the Father and the Son. Christ was thought of as kind and good, the Father as hard and unmerciful. The sinner's only hope was to flee to Christ for refuge before the Father could seize him. If the Father caught him, all hope was gone. God was conducting a hell where not only multitudes of creatures which God Himself had made were suffering the torments of the damned, but millions of little ones who had died too young to be guilty of conscious sin were in torment because their parents had neglected some ordinance of the church. On the red-hot floor of hell these little ones were writhing in agony and would do so throughout eternity, while the saints in glory would look on and praise God.

A Gloomy Doctrine

Lest some may think that I am exaggerating the teaching of this doctrine, I call the reader's attention to a little work of about 450 pages called Tracts for Spiritual Reading, by the Reverend J. Furniss, C.S.S.R., published in New York City. It is designed for the youth and little children, and contains the following words of approbation by the vicar general:

I have carefully read over this Little Volume for Children and have found nothing whatever in it contrary to the doctrines of Holy Faith; but, on the contrary, a great deal to charm, instruct and edify our youthful classes, for whose benefit it has been written." One section of thirty pages is headed "The Terrible judgment," and another of thirty-two pages is called "The Sight of Hell." From the latter I shall quote, but I would warn the reader to be prepared for some shocking statements and doctrines, which, to my mind, are altogether unworthy of God. Sad to say, some are still holding this view of God.

"In hell there are not two or three hundred prisoners only. Millions on millions are shut up there. They are tormented with the most frightful pains. These dreadful pains make them furious. The fury gives them strength, such as we never saw." Page 5.

"Look at the floor of hell. It is red like red hot iron. Streams of burning pitch and sulfur run through it. Isaiah 34. The floor blazes up to the roof. Look at the walls, the enormous stones are red hot; sparks of fire are always falling down from them. Lift up your eyes to the roof of hell; it is like a sheet of blazing fire.... Take a spark out of the kitchen-fire ' throw it into the sea, and it will go out. Take a little spark out of hell, less than a pin head, throw it into the ocean, it will not go out. In one moment it would dry up all the waters of the ocean, and set the whole world in a blaze." - Pages 6, 7.

"Listen to the tremendous, the horrible uproar of millions and millions and millions of tormented creatures mad with the fury of hell. Oh, the screams of fear, the groaning of horror, the yells of rage, the cries of pain, the shouts of agony, the shrieks of despair of millions on millions. There you hear them roaring like lions, hissing like serpents, howling like dogs, and wailing like dragons. There you hear the gnashing of teeth and the fearful blasphemies of the devils. Above all, you hear the roaring of the thunders of God's anger, which shakes hell to its foundations. But there is another sound!" Page 8.

"There is in hell a sound like that of many waters. It is as if all the rivers and oceans of the world were pouring themselves with a great splash down on the floor of hell. Is it then really the sound of waters? It is. Are the rivers and oceans of the earth pouring themselves into hell? No. What is it then? It is the sound of oceans of tears running from the countless millions of eyes. They cry night and day. They cry for ever and ever. They cry because the Sulphur smoke torments their eyes. They cry because they are in darkness. They cry because they have lost the beautiful heaven. They cry because the sharp fire burns them.

"Little child, it is better to cry one tear of repentance now than to cry millions of tears in hell. But what is that dreadful sickening smell?" - Pages 8, 9.

"The devil gave Job one stroke, only one stroke. That one stroke was so terrible that it covered all his body with sores and ulcers. That one stroke made Job look so frightful, that his friends did not know him again. That one stroke was so terrible, that for seven days and seven nights his friends did not speak a word, but sat crying, and wondering, and thinking what a terrible stroke the devil can give.

"Little child, if you go to hell there will be a devil at your side to strike you. He will go on striking you every minute for ever and ever, without ever stopping. The first stroke will make your body as bad as the body of Job, covered from head to foot with sores and ulcers. The second stroke will make your body twice as bad as the body of Job. The third stroke will make your body three times as bad as the body of Job. The fourth stroke will make your body four times as bad as the body of Job. How then will your body be after the devil has been striking it every moment for a hundred million of years without stopping?" - Page 13.

"The same law which is for others is also for children. If children, knowingly and willingly, break God's commandments, they also must be punished like others. This child committed very bad mortal sins, knowing well the harm of what it was doing, and knowing that hell would be the punishment. God was very good to this child. Very likely God saw that this child would get worse and worse, and would never repent, and so it would have to be punished much more in hell. So God, in His mercy, called it out of the world in its early childhood." - Page 21.

This horrible picture of God is taken, not from a book published in the Dark Ages, or from one that is out of print, but from a book that is available at bookstores today and is sold by the thousands. I have purposely omitted the worst part of it, as being too revolting. If the reader has the courage to read more of the same kind, he may procure the book and read for himself. But I do not recommend it.

The saddest part of this doctrine is, of course, the impression of God which is gained from it. A mother is willing to do all to save her child; Christ invited the little ones to come to Him; but the Father is of a different disposition. He, according to this doctrine, is cruel, hateful, unjust-at least as far as human judgment is concerned.

Christ's Revelation of God

It was to correct such wrong doctrines and conceptions that Christ came to this world. He came to give to men a correct view of the Father. And this was sadly needed. Of what use was it that Christ is good, and could and would draw all men to Him, if there still persisted in men's minds the old idea of the Father? Christ might save men, but if so it must be from the Father's wrath; and it was doubtful whether He could do this, for He himself admitted that the Father was greater than He. (John 14:28.)

Christ and the Father

It was therefore of supreme importance, not only to Philip, but to all, when Christ stated that He and the Father were one. Men knew Christ and loved Him. If the Father was like Him, all was well. They would not, then, need to fear Him, in the sense of being afraid of Him. If the Father loved them as Christ loved men, they, in turn, could love Him. The Father was no longer their

prosecutor and judge. He was their friend, one who loved them so much that He had given His only begotten Son to save them. The whole outlook of religion changed when Christ made His declaration concerning the Father.

As stated before, Christ came to this world to reveal the Father. This is clearly presented in the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. There the supreme burden of Christ's heart is to acquaint the disciples with the Father, and to assure them that the Father has the same interest in them that He has. The whole chapter deals with the Father. His name is mentioned twenty-three times, and there are five other references, making twenty-eight in all.

Christ begins by stating that in His Father's house there are many mansions. (Verse 2.) No man can come unto the Father but by Christ. (Verse 6.) If men had known Christ, they would also have known the Father, and now they know the Father and have seen Him, for they have seen Christ. (Verses 7-9.) Christ is in the Father, and the Father is in Christ. Even the words which Christ speaks are not His own, but the Father's. (Verse 10.) We are to believe that Christ is in the Father, and that the Father is in Christ. (Verse 11.) It is because Christ goes to the Father that His followers will be able to do what Christ did, and even greater things. (Verse 12.) The prayers which Christ promises to answer are granted, that the Father may be glorified. (Verse 13.) Christ promises to pray the Father to send the Holy Spirit. (Verse 16.) We shall know that Christ is in the Father and we in Him. (Verse 20.) Christ loves whoever keeps His commandments, and so does the Father, and they will both come unto such a man and make their abode with him. (Verses 21, 23.) The words Christ says are not His own words but the Father's which sent Him. (Verse 24.) The Father will send the Comforter in Christ's name, and He will teach them all things, and bring Christ's words to their remembrance. (Verse 26.) If they really loved Christ, they would be glad that He was to go away, for He was going to the Father, who is greater than He, and He will come again. (Verse 28.) Christ wants the world to know that He loves the Father, and that as the Father has given commandment, so He does. (Verse 30)

This chapter, however, does not exhaust Christ's references to the Father. The next three chapters continue the same theme. It is apparent that Christ is anxious that the disciples become acquainted with the Father and that they love Him as they do Christ. The Father, who is the husbandman, is glorified when the disciples bear much fruit. (John 15:1,8.) The Father loves Christ, who has kept His commandments, and Christ loves us. (Verses 9, 10.) All that Christ receives from the Father He communicates to us. (Verse 15.) If we bear fruit and our fruit remains, we may ask what we will of the Father and He will give it to us. (Verse 16.) Persecution will come to God's children, because the world does not know the Father. (Verse 21; 16:3.) The Father and the Son are so much one that whoever hates the one hates the other also. (John 15:23, 24.) All that the Father has belongs to Christ. We may therefore ask the Father anything in Christ's name, and He will give it to us. (John 16:15, 23.) The time will come when Christ will speak plainly of the Father. Although it is proper that we ask in Christ's name, and though Christ will pray to the Father for us, we should know that the Father Himself loves us, because we love Christ and believe that He came from the Father. (Verses 25-27.)

Christ's Demonstration

The seventeenth chapter of John contains the high-priestly prayer of Christ, which is addressed to the Father. In it Christ uses such expressions as "Father," "O Father," "holy Father," "Righteous Father." (Verses 1, 5, 11, 25.) He states that to know the Father and the Son is eternal life, and that He has manifested the Father's name to those who had been given Him. (Verses 34) The whole prayer breathes submission to the Father, and asks Him to bless and protect those for whom Christ is working. In the twenty-six verses of this chapter the Father is referred to more than fifty times, either under the title Father or by a pronoun which alludes to Him.

I do not wish to give the impression that mere numbers in themselves are important. It seems evident, however, that Christ was anxious to have His disciples know the Father, and to have them understand that the Father loves them even as He does. He emphasized the fact that He had come into the world to reveal the Father, and that this was His first work. "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gave me out of the world," Christ says, "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it." John 17:6,26. These statements mean that Christ has revealed to men the character and nature of God, and has in His life given a demonstration of what God is like, so that men no longer will need to be ignorant of the fact that "God is love."

Such a demonstration needs to be made to each generation; for men are not acquainted with the Father as they should be. Too many have not as yet caught the meaning of the word Father. They still think of God in terms of medieval theology, and fear Him more than they love Him. Jesus wants all to know that the Father loves them as dearly as does Christ Himself, and He takes every opportunity to impress this upon their minds. Even the well-known text of John 3:16 stresses the fact that it is God the Father who so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son to save perishing men. This is the height of love.

To some it may not seem important whom they worship the Father or the Son. The two are one, and neither is perturbed over the honor given the other. This is correct. Both are God, and both are to be worshiped. But it makes much difference to us if we conceive of the Father as having one character and the Son another. In fact, a wrong conception of the Father has done much to turn souls from God and religion, and fill them with hatred for everything that has anything to do with God or the church. A little consideration will make this clear.

The French Revolution

A case in point is the conduct of the French people during the time of the revolution at the close of the eighteenth century. In their hatred of religion they went so far as to pass legislation to unseat God. Yet, it was not so much God they hated as the conception of God which they had received from such doctrines as those quoted earlier in this chapter. The church was wholly responsible for these teachings and also for the results.

In France, before the revolution, the church owned much of the land, and, with the aristocracy, controlled the larger portion of France. This left the common people without adequate means of support, yet at the same time they were required to pay heavy

taxes, wholly beyond their capacity to provide. The people lived in miserable hovels with only the barest means of subsistence, while many of the clergy and the nobility lived in luxury and had all that heart could wish. It is not hard to believe that under such circumstances the people's love for God and the church was not very strong. If God were like the clergy, they reasoned, He was not interested in the poor and did not love them much, if at all.

It should be remembered that in an age when the common people could not read, the only conception they had of God and of religion was derived from the teachings of the church. The clergy interpreted God to the people. They were the mouthpiece of God. Had the people been able to read, had they been provided with Bibles, they could have read for themselves the requirements of God and compared them with the teachings of the priesthood. But few of them could read, and few of them had Bibles. Thus they were unable to help themselves. All they knew of the Bible or of God was secured through the priesthood.

The priests were arrogant and haughty. They had little concern for the poor. While they themselves were abundantly provided for, the poor were starving. There was little comfort to be obtained from attending divine service. Much of the preaching concerned itself with the obligation of paying church dues and observing the commands of the church. The sermons on the agony and suffering of the damned, with attendant picturesque description, were not very comforting. If we add to this the scenes that were witnessed almost daily, of men and women being tortured for their faith, it is no wonder that Christianity was at a low ebb.

The Inquisition

It is a matter of perplexity to some how the clergy of the church, many of them good men, could countenance the excesses of the church of the Dark Ages. How can men torture and kill their fellow men in the name of religion and of God?

It is understandable only in the light of men's conception of God. If a man fully believes that God will take His own creatures—even little children not come to years of accountability—and torture them in hell throughout eternity for neglect of some church ordinance, he may feel justified in going to almost any length to bring such a person into conformity with the faith. To save them from everlasting torture, even though it necessitated burning them for a few hours over a slow fire, would not be a matter of cruelty, but of mercy. If the man died impenitent, God would torture him through endless ages. Why not save him from such a fate? It was reasoned that it would certainly be better to use force to cause a man to obey the church than to let him fall into the hands of such a God. What if he had to burn for a few hours until life was extinct, when that might save him from being burned through the ages to come? It would be better and more merciful to torture him for a short time, better to crack every bone in his body, better to tear off the nails from his hands and feet, better to let him pass through any torture, however horrible and terrible, than to let him die outside the church and thus be lost, and fall into the hands of an angry God who would never cease torturing him. The torments which men might inflict upon him would have an end, for the human body can endure only so much. But in hell God would use His divine power to keep men alive that they might be tortured endlessly. It was such a viewpoint that caused men to torture and kill their fellow men.

It is a mistake to believe that the inquisitors of old were all hardened men, intent on causing suffering. They did cause suffering, but in many cases it was with intent to save rather than to destroy. It was their religion, their concept of God, which made them cruel. They believed that they were saving men from falling into the hands of the God they worshiped! What a travesty on religion and on all that is holy and good! Men torturing their fellow men in order to save them from a God who would torture them forever! And so men killed men, by the hundreds and by the thousands, even by the millions, all in the name of God. And this was done because men had a wrong conception of God and believed Him to be different from what He is.

It is of such conditions that Christ speaks when He says, "They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time comes, that whosoever kills you will think that he does God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me." John 16:2,3. Again He says, if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me." John 15:20,21. It will be noted that Jesus says that the reason men will persecute and kill others is that they do not know God, or Christ. This is in harmony with the position here taken, that the conception men have of God vitally affects their lives and demeanor.

Under such conditions as are here described, men can hardly be blamed for not loving God or wishing to serve Him. Men came to hate God and to hate His representatives. The teaching of the church made them hate God; they were afraid of Him, and hated both Him and the church. At the first opportunity that offered itself, they would have their revenge. And so in France when the people came into power, they publicly renounced God and declared His throne vacant. They had had enough of Him.

To depose God was all they could do to Him. They could not seize God; but they could revenge themselves upon His representatives, and this they proceeded to do. As a result of this came the horrible excesses of the French Revolution and the destruction of much that was noble and good.

This great social upheaval has gone down in history as the revolt of a people against God and an attempt to establish atheism in His place. But in reality it was not a revolt against God but against the frightfully perverted caricature of God which the French nation had been taught by its religious leaders. The revolt was against a God who would take their little children and torture them. The revolt was against men who claimed to represent God and who tortured their fellow men. The revolt was against a system which claimed to have the support of Heaven for living in luxury and abundance while others were starving and children were dying for lack of bread. Though the terrible scenes of the bloody days of the conflict cannot be condoned, they can be understood when we know the background. And when we learn what the nation had suffered, less harsh judgment will be rendered against the common people who took part in it.

It is safe to assert that the French Revolution was, at least partly, caused by a wrong concept of God. Year after year and century after century the people were taught that about God which was not true. They had but little opportunity to learn the falsity of what they were told, as few were able to read, and most were dependent almost wholly on the clergy for their knowledge of God. We

must, therefore, place the blame almost entirely upon the leaders whose work it was to teach the people. They failed in their duty, and reaped the result.

This outstanding experience on a large scale shows conclusively the danger of a wrong conception of God and His character. Christ knew well the danger inherent in false ideas about God. He knew that men would persecute and kill their fellow men "because they know not him that sent me."

Men are what they consider their god or gods to be. If their god is bloodthirsty, cruel, revengeful, they are likely to be the same. If their god is lustful, cunning, crafty, they tend in the same direction. The Bible states that God in the beginning made man in His own image. Men are still in the image of their gods. How necessary, therefore, that we have just and true ideas of God! As we think of God in our hearts, so we are likely to be.

To Know the Father

It is evident from our discussion thus far that we can have a just concept of God only as we get it from the teaching and example of Jesus. He came to this world for the express purpose of revealing the Father to man. There is nothing of which the world stands more in need than a true revelation of God. To know God is life eternal.

There is no word which Christ used more in speaking of God than "Father." To Him it meant a peculiarly intimate relation. To Him God was Father, Friend, Counselor, Protector, Provider-all that is true, noble, and good. It may indeed be said that Christ gave the word father a new significance, and lifted it from all that is earthly and common to everything that is noble and beautiful. He not only gave man a new concept of God; He gave every father a new concept of what he should be and might become. In this He immeasurably lifted the whole concept and standard of human relationship.

It may be news to some, but it is nevertheless true, that some Christians have but a slight acquaintance with the Father. He is almost a stranger to them. In many churches Christ is exalted and the Holy Spirit is honored, but the Father barely gets passing notice. Some churches appear to have a Fatherless religion; and were it possible for the Father to die, His passing would not seriously disturb them or affect their worship. They are accustomed to being without Him, He is so seldom mentioned that if His name were not uttered for a year, few would notice it. It is doubtful that such a condition is conducive to true spirituality. God the Father must not be politely bowed out of the church. He must be given His rightful place. And His place is first place. This is the place Christ assigns Him.

There has been an age long dispute among certain theologians as to who suffered the more, who sacrificed the more, who loved the more-the Father, or the Son. We are unable to settle the dispute, for the Bible throws no light on it. But it is certain that the Father suffered with the Son, that the Father sacrificed to the limit when He gave His Son, and that He so loved the world that He withheld not the dearest that He had. It is best not to attempt to settle that which has not been revealed. I do, however, wish to protest against any view which makes of God an absentee landlord, a transcendent God, a faraway potentate, a stranger to mankind. God Himself is anxious that this misconception be removed.

Sackcloth Within

There is a story told in the sixth chapter of the book of Second Kings which, by way of contrast, teaches a beautiful lesson. It is the story of the siege and famine of Samaria, with the attendant horrors. Men and women were starving, and food had risen to fabulous prices. Two women had entered into an infamous compact. Each had a son, and they agreed to kill first one son and eat him and then kill the other. The first part of the bargain had been carried out. They had killed and eaten the one child; but when it came to killing the other, the mother objected, hid her son, and refused to give him up. This started a quarrel, and at just this time the king appeared. When he heard the story he was so shocked that he rent his clothes. The record reads, "It came to pass, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and, behold, he had sackcloth within upon his flesh." 2 Kings 6:30.

The king was a wicked king. He had respect for neither God nor man, and robbed and killed as he pleased. Nevertheless, the story as here related makes us think a little more kindly of him. He was not entirely depraved. He wore sackcloth within. It might be expected that a king of that kind would wear silk and not sackcloth. But his people were suffering, and he was suffering with them. It was not of necessity or for show that the king wore sackcloth. He wore it as a matter of sympathy with his people. He wore sackcloth within.

I do not know why this is mentioned. May it be that God is teaching us that in the very worst of men there is some good? May it be that God is teaching us that we cannot always know what is within, that even a wicked king may wear sackcloth and the people not know it? We know of some people who are thought to be happy and without a care or a burden, who are carrying heavy loads of which few know. In fact, it may be said that few who have lived at all are without some secret sorrow, some heartache, which perhaps only the Lord knows. This knowledge should make us all a little more kind and sympathetic.

God is not exempt from the ordinary experiences of mankind. He knows what it is to suffer. He was with His Son in Gethsemane. He heard from Him the cry of anguish, He heard the agonized petition to have the cup removed. Had He been unable to save His Son, it would have been a terrific experience. For to stand helplessly by and see a loved one suffer is anguish personified. But to be able to help, be able to remove the cup, be able instantly to cause all suffering to cease, and then because of circumstances to refrain from using the power at one's disposal, is so much greater, higher, deeper, that it is unfathomable. But God must not and did not intervene. He must not lessen the suffering of His beloved Son. He must not remove the cup. Unless all analogies fail, the Father suffered as deeply as His Son.

There are times when we become discouraged and disheartened. Men fail us; friends forsake us; the outlook is dark. Sorrow like a cloud hangs over the soul; God seems far away. We pray, but no light breaks through; we weep, but no one seems to care or understand. We are alone, forsaken, crushed. Why does not God help? Why does He not reveal Himself? Does God not care?

Then we have a vision. We see God, really see Him.. We see Him in the garden as the Son prays to have the cup removed. We see Him as the scourge descends upon the bare back of His beloved. We see Him at Golgotha. We see Him as Jesus cries out in agony, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" And suddenly we understand. There is not a sorrow that He has not felt, not a pain that He has not experienced, not an anguish that has not pierced His heart. Through the gash made on Calvary we behold the very heart of God. And behold, He wears sackcloth within.

The revelation is profound, it is overwhelming. God is one with us! He knows our sorrows. His heart is pierced with our grief. In all our affliction He is afflicted. He understands, He knows, and He cares. Why, then, need I be afraid? At the heart of the universe is not an impersonal force, not a cruel avenger, not a soulless tyrant, but a Father, a God, a Savior, one who cares and loves. Why, then, should I not be happy, joyful, jubilant? God is my God; He is my Father. He loves me, and will not permit any sorrow or disappointment to come to me that is not for my good.

And so through tears I look up and smile, as my heavenly Father looks down in love upon me. I am no longer lonely, or discouraged, or downcast. I have had a glimpse of God. I have looked through the rent on Golgotha; I know that God understands and weighs every sorrow in the balances of the sanctuary; I know that He feels with me; I know that He is touched with my grief. I have seen Him. He wears sackcloth within.

It is this vision which Jesus would have us have of the Father. He wants us to know that the Father loves us, and will not permit anything to happen that is not for our good. He wants us to know that He and the Father are one, and that whoever has seen the Son has seen the Father also.

True Courtesy

The subject of the Father rightly holds a large place in the teaching of Jesus. Christ always gave the Father the preeminence, and spoke of Him in the highest terms of respect and love. It is not for us to determine the respective gradations in the Godhead-if indeed there are any-but it would be natural that Christ, instead of taking honor to Himself, should give the honor to the Father. And this He does. We might likewise expect the Father to be of the same mind. And this He is. Note how respectfully the Father speaks of the Son in Hebrews 1:8-10: "Unto the Son he said, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom.... And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning has laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of your hands." God the Father here calls the Son both God and Lord, and attributes to Him the making of the heavens and the earth. Thus each gives the other due honor and reverence, speaking in terms of deepest reverence and respect. Were we speaking of human personalities, we would consider such relationship and deference most beautiful and touching. True courtesy is one of the gifts of God. It smooths the path in many ways, and makes human intercourse pleasant and agreeable. It might not be appropriate to speak of God as being courteous and deferential, for that might be misunderstood; but in human language that is what God is. Christ and the Father have been together from the days of eternity. Yet each addresses the other in the most courteous and respectful way. And this courtesy is not founded on convention, nor does it consist only in empty phrases. It is founded in the deepest mutual respect and intimate love.

It would be well if more of courtesy, respect, and mutual love were manifest in human relationship. How easy it is for men to "get on each other's nerves"! How easy it is for a married couple to take each other for granted! How easy it is to omit the small courtesies of life that mean so much in human relationship! After a couple have been married for a year, or ten years, or forty, there is danger that some things are done that would not have been done in the first few months of marriage and some things are omitted that should under no circumstances be omitted. Life becomes humdrum, and expressions of either love or respect are uncommon. As James says, 'My brethren, these things ought not so to be.' James 3: 10. Courtesy and love are closely connected. It would be well if all remembered this.

Christ's respect and love for the Father were deep and sincere. He knew what the Father was; He knew His character and His plans and the means by which He expected to accomplish His plans. He was sure that if only men knew the Father, they would love Him. He made it His great mission to the world to make known the Father.

Throughout history God the Father has not generally been thought of or presented as a kind, heavenly parent whose chief delight is the welfare and happiness of His children. Too often men have thought of Him as a stern judge, an exacting master, a relentless avenger. To this teaching Christ referred when in the parable He made the unfaithful servant say of the master, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou has not sown, and gathering where thou has not strawed." Matthew 25:24. How different this concept is from what God actually is! God is not a hard God. He is more willing to give good gifts to His children than earthly fathers are to give good gifts to theirs. God is kind, long-suffering, forgiving, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Satan's Misrepresentation of God

This wrong conception of the Father has prevailed to a large extent throughout the ages. It had its origin in the Garden of Eden when Satan claimed that God was withholding selfishly from Adam and Eve the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God had said that they might not eat of the tree, and that if they did so, they would die. Satan said that this was not the truth nor the real reason for the prohibition. They would not die. It was rather this, that if they ate of the tree their eyes would be open; and God did not want their eyes open. He was withholding something from them that would make them wise. If they ate the fruit, they would be like gods. God was selfishly withholding from them that which would make them equal to Him. He was not willing to share.

From that time forth it has been Satan's studied purpose to misrepresent God. God is a hard master, unwilling to share His gifts with others. God is withholding from man His blessings and gifts, and is afraid to give him certain privileges lest he be like God. God does not tell the truth when He says that transgression will bring death. So far from the truth is this, Satan said, that if man would only eat of the forbidden fruit, he would become like God.

To counteract Satan's plans and to give men a just conception of Him, God in due time sent His Son to the world. God is not selfishly withholding His gifts from men. He is more willing to give them good gifts than men are to give such gifts to their children. He is willing with Christ freely to "give us all things." Romans 8:32. God did not tell Adam and Eve not to eat of the forbidden fruit because He wished to deprive them of something good. He did it to warn them of the pitfall that would cause their destruction. Through obedience they could become like God-the exact opposite of what Satan was telling them.

The controversy concerning the Father began when sin began, and will not end till sin shall be no more. Men do not know God. They take His name in vain; they impute to Him the same characteristics which Satan imputed to Him in the beginning. The great need of the world today is a knowledge of God. This knowledge is now to be given through the church. We are to be ambassadors for God.

Christ is exalted in all Christian churches. The church that does not exalt Christ has no just conception of God or of salvation and cannot be called Christian. The church also exalts the Holy Spirit. This is as it should be. No church can have the power of God for service, no church can fulfill its mission to the world, which neglects or ignores the wonderful gift of the Spirit. This is axiomatic.

If the churches of today neglected Christ and the Holy Spirit as they do the Father in their worship, they would immediately be charged with a Christless and a Spiritless worship. It is not sufficient for them to say that they worship God in Christ, and that it is immaterial if God is not mentioned often. If Jesus has so emphasized the subject of the Father, we may not take an indifferent attitude. There are deeper and weightier reasons for Christ's emphasis on this subject than appear on the surface. We find ourselves in a church-world today which has practically relegated the Father to a minor role, and put Him far in the background. If the church of the new covenant is to have the "faith of Jesus," if this faith of Jesus includes a profound reverence for the Father and an anxiety that He be given His rightful place in men's thinking and life, it is well for men to have their attention called to what Jesus believed and taught about God. This is part of our most holy faith, and must on no account be neglected.

28. The Holy Spirit

TO SOME Christians the Holy Spirit does not seem very vital. They believe in the existence of the Spirit, but the subject is vague in their minds. They have been taught that the Spirit is the third person of the Godhead, but they think of Him in a sense different from that in which they think of the Father and the Son.

Some believe that the Holy Spirit is an influence. To Jesus He was more than that. To Him He was a guide, a companion, a comforter. The promise which Jesus gave to His disciples was that the Spirit should be His personal representative to lead them into all truth, and that He would convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come," said Jesus, "he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." John 16:13, 14.

Note the four predictions regarding the work of the Spirit here made. First, He will guide into all truth. A guide is one who leads and gives directions. There were some things Christ could not tell His disciples while He was on earth, because they were not ready for them. I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now," He said. John 16:12. The things which they could not thus bear, the Holy Spirit would later teach them. In this way the Spirit would continue the work of Christ after His departure, and be His representative. Second, the Spirit shall "not speak of himself." "What so ever he shall hear that shall he speak." "He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." The Spirit works in close harmony with the Father and the Son. He does not speak of Himself; He does not work independently of the other persons of the Godhead; they all work together. In this the Spirit and Christ are alike. For Christ also did nothing of Himself. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do: for what things so ever he does, these also does the Son likewise." John 5:19, 20. "The Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." John 12:49.

Third, the Spirit "will show you things to come." The Spirit of God is the Spirit of prophecy. When John was shown the future, he was "in the Spirit." Revelation 1:10. "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1:21. The prophets searched "what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify." I Peter 1: 11. It is always the Spirit that is active in prophecy.

Fourth, "He shall glorify me." Christ was about to leave the world. After His departure the Spirit would come. This Spirit would not undo the work that Christ had done, or undervalue it. Rather, the Spirit would magnify Christ and His work. Thus doing, the Spirit would strengthen and solidify the foundations which Christ had laid. ,

Although these statements refer to the Spirit in His relation to the disciples, there is another work which the Spirit would perform for the world. "He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." John 16:8.

Convince of Sin

The word here used for reprove is variously translated convince and convict, as indicated in the margin and also in the Revised Version. It is the Spirit that reproves, convinces, and convicts of sin.

There is an intellectual conception of sin by which a person may see and acknowledge certain acts as undesirable and reprehensible even while he finds excuse for doing the very things he condemns. Intellectual recognition of sin is not enough. Heart conviction must come to the individual. "Thou art the man," the conscience must say to the soul. Unless conviction of sin is made personal, it remains only an opinion. Conviction must be individualized. This is the work of the Spirit. The Word can convict the intellect; the Spirit must convict the heart. Often the Spirit uses the Word with which to convict, but by whatever means the conviction is attained, it is the Spirit that accomplishes the work of bringing it home to the soul.

Conviction of sin is the work of the Spirit. That is why conviction often comes as the result of prayer for the Spirit's guidance. Some think that the reception of the Spirit always brings joy and happiness. It does so at times, but at other times unhappiness and sorrow come as an answer. If a soul is really in earnest and prays for the Spirit, God will send the Spirit; but He may come as a reprover of sin instead of as a comforter. God cannot bless as He would so long as sin is cherished in the heart. He cannot comfort a sinner in his sins. And since only renunciation of sin will bring real happiness, it is necessary that the Lord first send conviction of sin as an answer to prayer.

Some are not prepared for this. They ask for the Spirit, and the result is a deep sense of their own unworthiness and a conviction of sin. Can such be the answer to a prayer for a greater fullness of the Spirit? Yes, very often it is. The first work of the Spirit is to make men feel miserable; conviction of sin does this. But if men will only be convicted; if they will only follow the dictates of their consciences as guided by the Word; if they will only make right that of which they are convicted, all will be well. As they restore that which they have stolen, as they make confession of sin, as they humble their hearts before God, the Spirit will come to them with approval and blessing. Sweet peace will fill their souls, and God's smile of approbation will rest upon them. They have done what the Spirit bade them, and all is well. The same Spirit that convicted them now becomes a comforter.

We are not to think that we do not have the Spirit merely because we do not feel exalted. As has already been noted, the Spirit's first work is to convict of sin, and this conviction is not pleasant. A man under conviction of sin is not happy. How could he be? He feels condemned, discouraged, unhappy. Yet his very condition is brought about by the work of the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that has convicted and condemned him, not for the purpose of discouraging him, but to lead him to repentance. As he heeds the voice of the Spirit sent to him in love, he will come out into the light and rejoice over victories gained. But the first work of the Spirit is not designed to make him feel exalted.

Convince of Righteousness

If a sinner accepts the admonition of the Spirit and follows His advice, the Spirit will do His second work, and convince of righteousness. Righteousness is being right and doing right, and it presupposes a standard of right. To this standard the Spirit will testify. He will make personal application of general principles, and guide a soul in doing right. The Spirit first convicts him of sin, and as he turns from sin to do right, the Spirit approves of the change and convinces him of righteousness. This is His second work.

Righteousness is the opposite of sin. "Sin is the transgression of the law." I John 3:4. Righteousness, therefore, includes the keeping of the law. When the Spirit convinces of righteousness, He convinces of the law.

There are those who divorce the law and the Spirit, as though the law and the Spirit were antagonistic. This is not true. The two work closely together. The Spirit reproves of sin. But sin is transgression of the law. The Spirit, therefore, reproves the transgression of the law. But if He reproves the transgression, He must approve the keeping of the law. This He does, for He convinces of righteousness. Those who claim to have the Spirit would do well to check their lives with the law of God. It might be their salvation.

Convince of Judgment

The third thing which the Spirit will do is to convince of judgment. Those who do not listen to the voice of the Spirit, and who do not square their lives with the holy precepts of God, will be convinced of judgment. This has reference to the judgment to come, but it also has reference to that inner voice of the conscience that reminds a man when he is doing wrong that there is a judgment coming. That voice we sometimes call conscience, but in many cases we might rightly call it the voice of the Spirit speaking judgment to the soul.

Some do not believe in a judgment to come. Not far in the future such will be deceived, for the day is coming when there will remain "no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." Hebrews 10:26, 27. If men will now listen to the still small voice, they may escape the judgment later.

From what has been said, it is evident that the work of the Spirit is most important. We need to be convicted of sin. We need to be made aware of righteousness. There must be some voice to speak to us and warn us of the judgment to come. All this is the work of the Spirit. He applies to the individual soul the general principles of the Word. He says to the sinner: Thou art the man. It was this Spirit which Christ promised to send when He went away.

It was necessary for Christ to come to this world to give a revelation of the Father. It was also expedient that He give way to the Spirit after He had finished His work. I tell you the truth," Christ said; "it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." John 16:7. In His stead and as His representative He sent the Holy Spirit to carry on the work which He had begun. The importance of the work of the Holy Spirit cannot be overestimated.

The Unpardonable Sin

Of sin against the Holy Spirit, Christ says, "All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith so ever they shall blaspheme. But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." Mark 3:28-30.

Some dear souls are much perplexed over the unpardonable sin, and are afraid that they have committed it. Let such take heart, for none who has ever committed this sin is worried over it. The fact that a person is afraid that he has committed the sin against the Holy Ghost is almost sure evidence that he has not committed it.

We have already seen that it is the Holy Spirit that convinces of sin. If a person, therefore, is conscious of sin, it is proof that the Spirit has not left that person, but is still striving with him, and that he therefore has not sinned against the Spirit. When a person has sinned against the Spirit, the Spirit leaves him, and he has no more consciousness of sin. Ordinarily, therefore, as long as a person is conscious that he is a sinner, he has not gone beyond the line of mercy.

Sin against the Holy Spirit is not necessarily any particular sin. It is rather a gradual closing of the heart and mind to the call of God, which at last results in such hardening of the spiritual susceptibilities that God's voice is heard, no more. To illustrate: A young man hears the call of God, perhaps in some meeting in which the Spirit of God is present. He feels inclined to yield and to take his stand for the Lord; but something holds him back. He leaves the meeting an unconverted man, thinking, however, that there will be another opportunity and that when it comes he will yield to the influence of the Spirit. The opportunity comes, but again he fails to yield. He is yet young, he thinks, and the next time will be more convenient. Thus time after time he neglects the day of salvation. God still waits. The man has not yet passed beyond the boundary line. There is still hope.

But if the man could analyze his own condition, he would find that something has happened to him. Every time the Spirit calls, the voice seems to be weaker. He can now sit in a meeting and hear the most urgent calls, but they do not affect him as they did formerly. The Spirit calls as loudly as ever, but his spiritual hearing has been dulled, and he does not feel inclined to respond. He has heard the call so often that it ceases to affect him. He is nearing the line. Soon the last call that he will ever hear will sound, but he hears it but faintly, and it leaves him untouched. He has passed the line. God has done all for him that can be done. The call continues to sound, but he does not hear. He has sinned against the Holy Ghost. He has sinned away his day of grace.

Every time a person rejects the call of the Spirit, he is not only doing definite harm to his soul but is grieving the Spirit. To grieve the Spirit is not the same as to sin against the Holy Spirit, but it is the first step that will eventually lead to the last. When the Spirit impresses a person to confess his wrong, and he refuses to do so or delays, he grieves the Spirit. It is through the Spirit that the impressions come to confess sins or do anything else which God wants done. When the call is unheeded, the Spirit goes away grieved. We are therefore admonished: "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption." Ephesians 4:30.

God can reach the heart only through the influence of the Holy Spirit. There is no other way. If men reject the call, if they ridicule it, if they attribute it to evil influences, there is nothing else that God can do. If God speaks to men through the Word, and men reject the Word, God may send some individual instead. If they reject that individual, God will try some other way. He does not easily give up; but when men at last reject the instrument through which God attempts to send light, they reject the Spirit of God at the same time.

For that reason it behooves all to see to it that no light which God sends, through whatever means He may choose, shall be rejected. Our salvation is to follow the light as God gives it in the Word. There is safety in no other course.

It is not safe to delay doing God's will. When God speaks through the Word, when He speaks through the Spirit, we should hasten to obey. We must not grieve the Holy Spirit, and delays grieve Him. As a parent is grieved when a child fails to obey, so God is grieved when we are recalcitrant. God wants us to be obedient children.

There is danger in believing that there is always time to repent, and that there is no need of deciding promptly. Although ordinarily God calls repeatedly, there are times when men presume too much upon God's mercy. One such case comes to mind. -

In a certain place meetings were held and God's Spirit was present. Among those in attendance was a young man of promise in whom the preacher was much interested and for whom he had great hopes. One night a most earnest plea was made, and it seemed that the young man would yield; but he did not. After the meeting the preacher made one more attempt, but met only with the response that there would be time later.

Next day the preacher received a hurry call, but arrived too late to be of any service. The young man had been firing a steam engine. Another vehicle had rammed the engine, breaking a steam coil, and the young man was pinned where he could not move. Steam had escaped, literally boiling the flesh off the young man, and when the preacher arrived, life was extinct. The young man had heard the last call.

Ordinarily sin against the Holy Spirit is brought about by the gradual hardening of the heart to the call of God. This hardening may become fatal in small matters as in great. It is not necessary to commit what is called a great sin, to cross the line of God's mercy. The person who has stolen 10 cents and refuses to confess his sin and make restoration, is just as surely grieving the Spirit of God as is he who transgresses in greater matters.

This is written to warn those who think that they can grieve the Spirit, reject light, and yet be guiltless. It is also written to encourage those souls who, because of lack of knowledge, are afraid that they might have sinned against the Holy Ghost. Let such know that the very fact that they are concerned over the matter is evidence that they have not gone beyond the line. Let them make sure, however, that they are walking in all the light God sends to them. A man may not have sinned against the Holy Spirit, but this does not guarantee that all will be well for the future. We must continually follow on to know the Lord.

The Holy Spirit and Education

In the earlier part of this chapter mention was made of the work of the Holy Spirit in guiding and teaching men. He will not only convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, but will guide into all truth and show things to come. But He has also other work.

After the resurrection Christ met with the disciples to give them further instruction for their future work. One of the chief subjects was the Holy Spirit. He had spoken to them of the Spirit before, but they had not fully grasped the significance of His words. As He was about to leave them and send the Spirit to take His place, He gave them final instructions as to the Spirit, His reception and work.

Christ "being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, you have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But you shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1:4-8.

It is noteworthy that the disciples were under Christ's tutorship more than three years before they were ready for the outpouring of the Spirit. When Christ called them to follow Him, they were unlearned men, without any literary training. They were also unconverted, and ignorant of the very foundation principles of the gospel. They needed to be taught many things before they could be worthy representatives of Jesus. They must be rooted and grounded in the truth, for they would meet opposition. Whereas it was necessary for them to receive the outpouring of the Spirit for service, there was a work that must be done for them before they were ready to receive the power of God. They must be taught.

The Training of the Disciples

"You shall receive power." Christ wanted His disciples to have this power, but He wisely waited with its bestowal until they were prepared to use such power as should be given them. Only when He considered them ready did He make them partakers of the Holy Ghost.

There are some well-meaning people who believe that if a man only has the Spirit, nothing more is needed. It would be well if such would note how Christ considered this matter.

Christ needed men, men filled with the Spirit. He found it necessary, however, to give them a thorough training for more than three years before He entrusted them with the power of the Holy Spirit that alone can make education effective in the gospel.

There are diverse views concerning the value of education, as of other things. There are those who think education is everything, while others think it of doubtful value. As is often the case, neither side has the whole truth. I would venture the assertion, however, that education not balanced by sound religious principles is far from an unmixed blessing. In many cases it is a definite curse.

Christ was the Master Teacher. If we assume that His ministry lasted a little more than three years, He had the disciples under His care for about that length of time. His school, however, did not meet only a few hours a day. It was more nearly a twenty-four-hour-a-day school. Nor did it convene only four or five days a week. It was in session every day, for though Christ observed the Sabbath, the disciples probably learned as much on that day as on any other. Nor was there any summer vacation. School lasted fifty-two weeks in the year. It is, therefore, not entirely correct to say that the disciples went to school three years, if by that statement we mean to convey the idea that they went to school three of our school years. It was much longer than that. Also, we may believe that Jesus was a most efficient teacher.

We are, therefore, justified in saying that though Jesus chose twelve unlearned men, they were far from ignorant when they had finished their course. Unless we take the position that Jesus failed as a teacher, we must believe that three years of intensive training gave the disciples a grasp of His mission and of their work that removed them far from the charge of being uneducated. They were men of native ability and sound judgment. Under the tutorship of Jesus they developed into leaders, chosen of God to be the founders of the new church which He was about to establish.

Let no man despise education. The church of God needs men who know their God and know their Bible. Too many preachers preach undisturbed by facts. Too many preachers preach without a sound background of Biblical knowledge. If Christ were here, He might again choose unlettered men, but He would send them to school. He would give them a course such as He gave the twelve when He was with them. And when He was done with them, men would take knowledge that they had been with Jesus.

We object and surely God objects to a ministry engaged in lecturing, in social work, in political activity, in international good-will endeavors, to the neglect of the work to which it is called and to which it is ordained. We object to a ministry that is well versed in psychology, social sciences, and social graces, but unacquainted with the great Textbook given by God. We object to the change of front in recent years on the part of the ministry from being physicians of the soul to dabblers in psychoanalysis, psychiatry, and kindred sciences and pseudo-sciences. The people have a right to demand a well-educated ministry, but that education must first of all concern itself with the knowledge of God. All else is secondary.

The kind of ministry that Christ developed when He undertook to educate the twelve men under His care is the kind of ministry we need today. Those men knew the prophecies, they knew the law, they knew their God, and they knew Christ. With that knowledge they met the world, and conquered. Twelve men today with the same zeal for God and knowledge of Him could

accomplish a similar work. This, however, can no more be done now than it could then without a definite influx of power, available only through the Holy Spirit.

You Shall Receive Power

“You shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto me.” Acts 1:8. All the knowledge of the world can do little to change men's lives unless accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit. It would be natural to think that after the disciples had been three years with Christ they would be qualified for their work. But Christ asked them to tarry in Jerusalem until they should be endued with power from on high. He told them that it would be useless to go anywhere even after they had been in His school three years-until they received the Holy Ghost.

There can be no mightier testimony to the need and indispensability of the Holy Spirit than this. If learning alone, if a knowledge of the Scriptures alone, if acquaintance with prophecy and sacred history alone, could qualify men for the work of the ministry, these men were qualified. They had finished their course in the school of Christ, but He did not consider them ready until they had received the anointing of the Spirit. Without this anointing they were not prepared to go forth.

‘You shall receive power.’ Too many men have education without power, knowledge without wisdom, brains without conscience. Too many sermons are preached without accompanying power, and the words fall flat. If the church of God ever is to do the work that is needed in the world today for the salvation of souls, the power of God must come into the lives of men and women, until souls cry out in agony, ‘What must we do to be saved?’

Witnessing

“You shall be witnesses.” Power was given the disciples for the purpose of witnessing. To witness means to give testimony, to tell what has been seen or experienced, and does not necessarily mean to preach. Let us apply this to the subject in hand.

The disciples had been with Christ three years. They had seen and heard many things, and had passed through many experiences. Their witness consisted in telling these things, and how they had been affected by them. It was a simple procedure, and did not require great oratorical ability. They simply told what they knew.

This is how John records it: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” I John 1:14.

That is all there is to witnessing-telling what has been seen and heard. That is also the essential of preaching, if it is to be effective preaching. It is of little use that a minister tells of the blessing and value of prayer if he has had no experience in it himself. It is of little use that he tells of the peace that comes to a soul as he surrenders to God, unless he himself has experienced that peace. It is of little use that he tells of the blessing that comes with sacrificial giving if he has never had any part in it himself. In all these things he should be able to give his testimony as to the blessing that comes to his own soul. Unless he can witness by personal experience that what he says is true, his preaching will have little power.

Peter's speech on the day of Pentecost was not a finished oration. Yet three thousand souls were converted by it. Peter was merely telling a straightforward story of the recent experience of the disciples. The people thought that the disciples were drunk when they began speaking with tongues. Peter tells them that this was not the case, but that it is a fulfillment of prophecy. Then he goes on to tell them of Jesus whom they had taken and by wicked hands had crucified and slain. But death could not hold Him. He rose again. “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.” “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made this same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Acts 2:36.

This was the sermon-not long or profound. Peter merely told them what he knew concerning the happenings of the last days, and said that they were all witnesses of the resurrection. As only the disciples had seen Christ since the resurrection, Peter did not have reference to the multitude when he said that they were all witnesses, but only to those who had seen Jesus. But something in Peter's testimony brought conviction to the multitude, for they cried out, ‘Wen and brethren, what shall we do?’ That day three thousand were converted. This could have been accomplished only through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit took an ordinary sermon and added power to it, power of witnessing, power of conviction. And the results were marvelous. Without that power very little would or could have been accomplished.

That is the work which the Spirit would do today had He the opportunity. He would add power to sermons, He would add power to lives, and make them mighty for God to the salvation of souls.

The Power of the Spirit

One question remains to be answered. How may this power be obtained? How may we receive the Holy Spirit? In this matter the Scriptures do not leave us in doubt.

When the disciples were told to wait until they should receive power from on high, they went to an upper room where they “all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.” Acts 1:14. The result of this seeking of God was seen in the attainment of full accord among themselves, so that “when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.” Acts 2:1.

The disciples had not always been of one accord. There had been strife and debate among them over who should be the greatest. It was not until after the resurrection that the disciples were ready for the lesson which Jesus had been trying to teach them for a long while. They had felt their impotence time and again, and at last it dawned on them where the difficulty lay. They needed power, and this power could not be had as long as there were rivalry and envy among them, each trying to get the highest place. Their only hope was in God and in unity with their brethren. All self-seeking must be laid aside. There must be no strife among them. There must be no seeking of selfish advantage. On the other hand, there must be a seeking after God such as they had never experienced before. And when they became really in earnest, when they began to seek the Lord with all their hearts, the promised blessing was theirs. Ten days in the upper chamber, and Pentecost came.

God is not unwilling or hesitant to give the Holy Spirit to those who earnestly seek for it. "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke 11:11-13. The well-known promise of the Savior, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," is quoted by Luke in this connection. "For everyone that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened." Verses 9, 10.

Christ was anxious not only that His disciples should understand about the Holy Spirit, but also that they should receive Him. He knew that they would be powerless without Him, and that it would be of little use to attempt to do anything for God unless they had the Spirit with them. It is the same today. More than ever do we need power for witnessing. If we are to do the work required in a time such as this, we must have an unction from on high. This requires an outpouring of the Spirit even greater than that of Pentecost. It calls for prayer and supplication, and the laying aside of every wrong ambition, every seeking for supremacy. When we are willing to pray with and for one another, we shall "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 fullness of Christ." Ephesians 4:13. When that state is reached Pentecost will again come. God speed that day!

29. The Last Things

THE Bible says, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Hebrews 9:27. As far as the Biblical record goes, only two men have escaped death: Enoch and Elijah. These were both translated to heaven. All other men have gone the way of all flesh, and have had to descend to the grave. Unless the Lord comes, all men who are now living will also die. From this there seems to be little chance of escape.

This brings us to the question of death, judgment, and the hereafter. What hope or fear have we of survival after death? What about the judgment, and what about the life to come? What may we know about these matters? Of what may we be sure? First about death. Death was not part of the original plan 'Of God. It came into the world as a result of sin, as have also sickness, pain, and sorrow. Viewed from one angle, it is a curse; viewed from another angle, it is a merciful provision of God for the good of man under conditions which are as they are because of sin. Can death ever be a merciful provision? Yes, God intended 'it to be so because of sin. But is it not an enemy? It certainly is. How can it be both at the same time?

It will not be denied that death comes as a relief to many. Men lie suffering from day to day with no prospect of ever recovering. At last their sufferings end, and they are at rest. We do not like to see them go, but we know that it is best. Death is a merciful provision by God to end suffering.

But this is not all. According to the Bible there is a judgment coming in which all men are to give an account of what they have done and of how they have lived. With many men, the longer they live, the more they sin. This is especially true of those who are finally impenitent. They have passed the day of grace. They do not wish to be saved. There is nothing that God Himself can do that will change their minds. Why should they live on? They will only heap more punishment upon themselves. Would it not be much better, at least for them, if life terminated at some time soon after they have made the irrevocable decision?

But more are involved than merely themselves. Ought not wicked people to die for the good of others? There have been tyrants living in the earth whose only delight seemed to be to make other people miserable. They have tortured and killed multitudes. The only relief men have had, the only hope almost, was that death would relieve them of the monster. But suppose he could not die?

Again, is it not a good thing that men who are evil do not live forever to influence other men for evil? Ought not each generation to have a chance to settle its own destiny, rather than to be influenced by men, old in sin and in wicked ways, who have themselves decided against God, and whose only ambition is to induce others to go with them to damnation? What a world this would be if all the Ingersolls, Paines, Robespierres, Neros, Caligulas, Herodias, were living now and functioning! Thank God that they are dead, and that the world today, evil as it is, does not have to contend with wicked men of past ages. Death is an enemy; it was not a part of the original plan of God; but under the circumstances it becomes a blessing in part, and is the best provision that God, in His mercy, could make. Let us believe that God does all things well, and that if there had been any better way of handling the situation, God would have found it.

We, therefore, accept death as we do some other things that have been made necessary by sin, not as ideal-far from it-but as a necessary evil. Whoever has stood at the bedside of a loved one and has seen life slowly ebb away, will not call death a friend. No, it is an enemy that will be abolished and that will find no place in the world to come.

After Death

But after death, what? “After this the judgment.” Hebrews 9:27. Does judgment come immediately after death, or is judgment delayed until the end of the world? The latter appears to be the truth. Hear Christ's words: “The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Matthew 13:38-43.

In harmony with this is the statement concerning the judgment found in a later chapter in Matthew: “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.” Matthew 25:31-33.

These two statements of Jesus declare that the judgment shall be in “the end of the world,” “when the Son of man shall come in his glory.” They leave no room for dispute.

Why should there be a judgment at the end of the world, or at any other time? Why is a judgment necessary? This raises another question: How can there be a judgment when men are dead? Will it not be necessary to have a resurrection if there is to be a judgment? It will. Here are Christ's words: “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life. And they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” John 5:28, 29.

This does not mean that it is necessary for the resurrection to take place before the investigation of the records is made; for men will be judged according to what is written in the books. But it will be necessary to have a resurrection before the execution of the judgment takes place. It is to this that Jesus refers when, in the verse preceding the statement of the resurrection, it is said that Jesus has been given “authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.” Verse 27. With this other scriptures are in harmony. John says, “The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” Revelation 20:12. This refers primarily to the investigation of men's record. Those whose cases are investigated are said to be dead. But when the investigation is completed, when the final decision has been reached, the execution of the judgment takes place. Before this execution there must be a resurrection of the body. For it is in the body that men have sinned, and it is in the body that they are to receive their punishment or their reward. Of this Paul says, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” 2 Corinthians 5: 10.

“All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.” John 5:28, 29. This is the resurrection. Both the good and the bad die. The time shall come when all shall be raised, “they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” Verse 29. This statement speaks of two resurrections, one of the good and one of the evil. One is called the resurrection of life; the other is known as the resurrection of damnation. “Blessed and holy is he,” says John, “that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” Revelation 20:4 The first resurrection consists of those who are “Blessed and holy.” They come forth to the resurrection of life. On the other hand, those who have part in the second resurrection come forth to damnation. For this reason Christ calls the second resurrection the resurrection of damnation.

The Second Resurrection

We accept Jesus' teaching of two resurrections: the first, the resurrection of life; the second, the resurrection of damnation. Between these two resurrections is a period of one thousand years, as is stated in Revelation 20:14 The righteous are raised at the beginning of this period; the wicked, at the end. At this time we shall consider the case of the wicked only.

If we conceive of the plan of God as being one which provides for the selection from among mankind of those who shall be worthy of life and the rejection of the others as unworthy of existence, we recognize that men themselves by their lives and the use they make of them decide their destiny. The reward for the right use of life is more life, the result of failure to appreciate life, or to use it rightly, is the deprivation of it. This seems eminently fair and just.

Considered from this viewpoint, the judgment should consist of a review of each life with the purpose of determining how that life has been used, whether it has been conducted according to the rules of life, and, from the use made of opportunities granted, whether future and prolonged life would be a blessing or a curse, the welfare of other creatures of God's hand being taken into consideration. The decision arrived at would be based upon the faithful and unerring record of each life. Cognizance would be taken not only of actual words and deeds but also of motives; and in many cases credit or debit would be entered not only for what was actually done but for what would have been done had opportunity presented itself.

The Judgment

How is the judgment carried on? Is it done in the twinkling of an eye, as God might conceivably do it, or do others have a part in it? It is clear that God Himself would not need records of any kind. He knows the story of each life; He does not need time for investigation. So far as He is concerned, whatever judgment or whatever investigation there is to be, could be done in a moment. His all-seeing eye and His divine wisdom could settle every case without any investigation or records of any kind.

The judgment, however, is not quite so simple as that. There are others than God concerned in it. It has never been God's plan to do things independent of or without the knowledge of His creatures. So far as this world is concerned, "the Lord God will do nothing, but he reveals his secret unto his servants the prophets." Amos 3:7.

For this there are good reasons. In the great controversy between good and evil, God has much at stake; but so have angels and men. God has been accused by Satan of injustice, and He has set Himself the task of justifying His ways before men. But God does not act without the full knowledge of His creatures. This is especially true in the matter of judgment. God could leave the angels out of consideration in the judgment. But to do so might sow seeds of future difficulty. Having created angels intelligent beings, God takes them into His confidence and gives them a definite part in the final decision of who shall be saved and who shall not.

God knew all things from eternity. He knew what it meant for Him to create. He knew the cost, to Him, of creation. He knew that in creating intelligent beings with freedom of will He ran the risk of having some choose not to serve Him. God also knew that beings with freedom of choice would not be satisfied with being treated as incompetents. For these reasons God does nothing unless He reveals what He has in mind to those whom it concerns.

Angels were involved in the original controversy. Some of them sinned; but the full meaning of their sin was not understood by the other angels. Time must be given for a full demonstration of the nature of sin. This time has been given. Satan has had ample time to demonstrate what he would do if he had the opportunity. He demonstrated that when he hanged the Savior on the cross. He demonstrated it by the persecution of the saints during the Dark Ages, and he will make another demonstration before the end. There will remain no doubt in the mind of any as to the justice of ending Satan's career. Men and angels will be satisfied.

But another question arises. Because of the experience which the angels have had with sin, will they consider it safe to permit millions of human beings to be taken into heaven, beings who have all sinned? Were not the angels who sinned cast out of heaven? Will it be safe to admit to heaven men who also have sinned, or will it bring a repetition of the last six thousands years of sorrow? God might cast a million fallen angels out of heaven and introduce a million human beings into heaven without giving any explanation to anyone; but God does not create angels thinking beings, and then violate all the rules of relationship with such beings, and treat them as if they were unreasoning creatures. God, having made angels as He has, respects the work of His own hand, and takes them into His confidence and gives them reasons for what He does. He takes them into partnership with Himself, lets them work with Him and see how things are done, and permits them to do what they are capable of doing. For intelligent beings it is always more satisfactory to work with rather than for a person. Christians are laborers together with God. They are not merely working for Him. "We are laborers together with God: you are God's husbandry, you are God's building." I Corinthians 3:9.

These are some of the reasons why God does not conduct the judgment Himself independently of the creatures who are vitally concerned in the outcome. This explains why the judgment cannot take place in the twinkling of an eye. God Himself could so conduct it, but as angels and men are to have a part in it, the procedure must be gauged to their capacity. "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened." Daniel 7:9, 10.

As was stated before, the outcome in individual cases in the judgment hinges upon the testimony of the angels, upon the record they present. Under such conditions no question can ever arise in their minds as to the justice or wisdom of the judgment. It is doubtless for the same reason that men are to have a part in the judgment of the fallen angels. (1 Corinthians 6:3.)

The Punishment of the Wicked

The judgment decides not merely whether a person is to be saved or lost, but also what the reward or the punishment shall be. Since the reward of the saints is discussed elsewhere, we shall here confine ourselves to the fate of the wicked.

The question may be asked whether all the wicked do not receive the same amount of punishment, even as all the righteous receive the same reward. To this the answer may be given that the righteous do not all receive the same reward, and the wicked do not all receive the same punishment.

"But," says one, "do not all the saints receive eternal life, and is not death the fate of all the wicked? How, then, can there be said to be any difference?"

"The wages of sin is death," and "the soul that sins, it shall die," are Biblical expressions. Romans 6:23; Ezekiel 18:20. So also is the statement, "The gift of God is eternal life." Romans 6:23. According to this, those who sin shall die, and those who accept God's gift shall receive eternal life. This does not seem to leave much room for any difference. Yet, before arriving at conclusions, all the facts should be known. Let us, therefore, look at some other statements.

"That servant, which knew his lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." Luke 12:47, 48.

This seems eminently fair. Why should not the one who did much evil have correspondingly greater punishment? Or why should not the one who had greater light be considered more guilty? According to this scripture some will be beaten with "few" stripes; others, with "many."

"Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." I Corinthians 3:8. I will give unto every one of you according to your works." Revelation 2:23. "Unto Thee, O Lord, belongs mercy: for thou renders to every man according to his work." Psalm 62:12.

These texts state definitely, not that every man shall have the same reward, but that every man shall receive rewards according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life." Romans 16, 7. The wicked receive death as their wage, and the saints receive life as a gift. But each receives "his own reward" "according to his own labor."

Man can earn death, for the "wages of sin is death." Man cannot earn eternal life, for the "gift of God is eternal life.--In respect to life and death, all are treated alike. All who are saved receive eternal life as a gift, and all who are lost have earned eternal death. But in addition to the final punishment, death, some receive "few" stripes; others, "many."

In the end there must be exclusion from the life of God on the part of all who are deemed unworthy of immortality, but there must also be a punishment for each according to his deserts. Apart from the Bible statements to this effect, mere justice would demand that not all be treated alike. Some crimes are regarded as more serious by a human tribunal than others. What judge, for instance, would not regard a felonious assault as more serious in the eyes of the law than overtime parking, and murder more serious than the violation of a city ordinance against unnecessary noise?

Beyond the Bible statement that some will be beaten with few stripes and others with many, we have no means of knowing in just what way the punishment will be differentiated. We do know that in addition to the final exclusion of the wicked from the joy and happiness which will be the heritage of the saints, there will be a punishment that will fit each sin. We must leave the matter there.

Why Punishment?

Some might raise the question why there should be punishment at all. Is not God love, and does love punish? Love and punishment are not incompatible. Rather, love does punish, and love that does not punish may by that very omission cease to be love. A mother whose little son insists on going swimming in a treacherous stream will do more than gently remonstrate with him. She will take whatever steps are necessary to stop him from going swimming in that place. Her love for the son will lead her to punish severely if necessary; indeed, should the mother fail to do all in her power to prevent him from going swimming in that stream, she could justly be challenged as to her protestations of love for her offspring.

Punishment need not necessarily be remedial. There is remedial punishment, and there is also punishment that is not remedial. Most of the remedial punishment is administered in this life; the punishment in the future life is strictly nonremedial. This raises the question as to whether punishment of any kind can be justified that does not have a definite remedial effect in contemplation.

Much harm has been done to religion by unwarranted assertions concerning the teaching of Scripture on the subject of future punishment. There are those who believe and teach that God is too good to inflict punishment. On the other hand, there are those who believe and teach that God will punish endlessly, that His wrath will never be satisfied, and that as long as He Himself lives, some will suffer in hell. Both of these contentions are erroneous. The Bible teaches that though there will be punishment, even severe punishment, it will be just, and proportioned to the transgressions committed.

First, why should there be any punishment at all? Why should there be a judgment? Justice is not always had in this life. There are those who do evil and fare well; there are those who do good and yet suffer much. If evil deserves punishment, should not punishment be meted out impartially to all? Why should some suffer here and others escape? To balance this, there must be a judgment sometime in the future in which all inequalities will be evened up. If evil deserves punishment, there must be a judgment. If evil does not deserve punishment, then some have suffered undeservedly in this life. It is not consonant with justice and fair play to have some suffer and some not.

Would it be better if there were no punishment at all for transgression, here or hereafter, and no evil results from sinning? No. If in the very nature of things there are certain laws of life the transgression of which means death, then men should be made acquainted with these rules and with the penalty for transgression. There should be a written rule of conduct, such as is found in the Ten Commandments, and also an inner voice of correction, such as is found in the conscience. There should be a bodily reminder of transgression, such as is provided in the painful physical results of doing evil. With these three means provided, man would be without excuse should he decide to transgress.

If life is a time of learning, it is just as well that the child learn early that a hot stove will burn the fingers as well as cook a meal, and that every transgression will sooner or later bring its own punishment. If transgression and punishment were not associated in life, one of the chief means of educating men in right living would be lacking. If we admit that good is better than evil, and that the laws of life are not arbitrary commands and demands, but are grounded in man's nature and need, then there must be some way of teaching him that transgression means pain and eventual death. Take away the natural result of suffering, consequent upon transgression, and one effectual means of teaching men righteousness is removed. Suffering must result from transgression, or life's lessons will be much harder to learn.

However, not all of life's lessons are for the person involved. The man who plunges to his death from a dangerous precipice upon which he has foolishly ventured, will not learn much from his experiment. Whatever lesson there is in it must be for others. In all minor transgression among men the punishment may in a certain sense be said to be remedial. Where capital punishment is inflicted, this plays only a minor role.

I have been using the term punishment in the popular sense, rather than in the theological one. Results of transgression may indeed be considered punishment, but not in the sense of being inflicted by God for evil committed. If a father administers correction to his son, the punishment is different from that which comes as a natural result of eating unripe fruit. Both are punishment-the one

inflicted by a superior authority, the other a natural result of transgression. It is not very often that God directly punishes a man. Ordinarily the punishment a man gets is such as is inherent in the transgression itself. He is in effect administering his own punishment according to his transgression. He sows the seed and is reaping the harvest. It is not punishment inflicted by an angry God, but part of the lesson of life which he must learn if he is to live successfully. If he continues to transgress, he is violating the rules which alone make life possible. God Himself cannot save him unless He should nullify all law. This simply cannot be done.

From our argument it follows that wrongs not punished in this life will and should be punished in the future life. This punishment need not be remedial. It is the result of evil doing. As hanging a man is not done for the purpose of reforming him, so God's punishment is merely visiting upon the sinner's head the result of his rebellion against God.

It is not pleasant to consider that there are those who count themselves unworthy of life, and at last will be deprived of it. Such, however, make their own decision. They are not willing to abide by the rules of life, and would not be happy if they were compelled to. Indeed, many would like to enjoy life, but only upon their own conditions. They have not learned to adjust themselves, they have not learned the art of living, they have not learned to respect and honor the Giver of life, and they do not give Him thanks for His unspeakable gift. They have decided that life is not worth what it costs, and God abides by their decision.

just what will be the punishment of the wicked? Will they suffer forever in an eternally burning hell, or will the time come when sin and sinners will be no more, and the universe will be dean as it was in the beginning?

The Nature of Man

This brings us to a consideration of the soul and the nature of man. If man is in possession of an immortal soul, if he is incapable of death, there is a possibility of eternal suffering. If, on the other hand, man is mortal, if he does not possess a never-dying soul, there can be no eternal suffering, as no one can suffer eternally who does not live eternally. This is so evident that it is beyond dispute. The question of the future of the wicked, so far as its duration is concerned, hangs, therefore, upon the question of the immortality of the soul.

In a study of the soul we are at the outset met with the fact-and to some a most astounding fact-that though the word soul is used hundreds of times in the Bible, never once is the soul said to be immortal! Let the significance of this sink deep into the consciousness of all: never once in all the Bible is the soul said to be immortal, or undying, or ever-living; nor is any other word used that gives a like or kindred meaning. On the contrary, man is said to be mortal, and the soul is said to be mortal, capable of death and dissolution.

Does not the Old Testament mention the soul? Do not the evangelists and the apostles? Does not Christ? Yes, all of them speak of the soul; over and over again it is mentioned; but, as stated above, not once is it spoken of as being immortal. Whoever, therefore, speaks of an immortal soul, speaks of that which has no foundation in the Bible. The Word of God does not recognize such an expression. It is foreign to the teaching of the Bible and of Christ.

Lest any misunderstand what I say here, let me hasten to explain that I believe in a life to come, in eternity, and in a never-ending life for the saints of God. However, this is altogether different from the un-Biblical notion of an immortal soul.

Is it reasonable to believe that God would so create man that he could never die, never cease to exist, even if God Himself should so will it? Would it be wise for God thus to limit Himself? If man should sin after God had created him, if man should prove himself unworthy of life, would it not be better if God had not created him immortal? Is it best to compel a man to live whether he wishes to or not? Man has no choice in coming into being. He had my choice when God created him; he has no choice now in deciding whether he wishes to be born. Would it not be more reasonable to give man a temporary existence while he is being tested, and if the man wishes to continue living, if he is willing to abide by the rules of life, then give him an endless life in happiness and bliss? On the contrary, if man, after having tried life, decides that he does not want it on the conditions laid down, would it not be better if he could cease to be, and be as though he had not been? From a mere human viewpoint, this would seem to be the better way.

God in His infinite love and wisdom created man. He wanted to share life, and the blessings of it, with such as would appreciate what He was doing for them. Deciding to create an intelligent being with the power of choice, He gave him an opportunity to exercise that choice. This was done in the Garden of Eden. If Adam should decide that life was worth while, God made it possible for him to obtain and retain it by obeying the rules of life which had been made plain to him. The condition upon which life might be had was simple enough: he was to obey God. His future hinged upon his obedience. He could have life if he wanted it. The test was not a severe one; rather it was the lightest conceivable. If he disobeyed, it was not circumstances that compelled him, or want. There was every inducement for him to do right.

Man chose not to obey. What, now, was the penalty which God had said would follow? The sentence was, "Thou shalt surely die." Not a word is said of eternal suffering, not a word concerning his inability to die. Quite the contrary is stated: "Lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: ... he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." Genesis 3:22-24. God did not want sinners to have eternal life; hence, "he drove out the man," lest he "eat, and live for ever." To believe in the immortality of sinners, to believe that the sinner does not and cannot die, that he has an immortal soul incapable of death, is to echo the first lie told by Satan in the Garden of Eden, when he said to man, "You shall not surely die." Verse 4.

Adam had no clear conception of death, for he had never witnessed it. God, however, explained it to him. He told him that death means that he shall "return unto the ground; for out of it was thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Verse 19. God had made man out of the dust of the ground. He had breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and he had become a living soul. The statement is not that God gave him an immortal soul, or that an immortal soul was thrust into him, or even that God gave

him a living soul. The statement is simply that man became a living soul by the act of God breathing into him the breath of life. It was not a soul given to man. It was man that became a living soul. (Genesis 2:7.)

What Happens at Death?

“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.” Ecclesiastes 12:7. God in the beginning breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life. That breath was not personal, not an entity, not individualized, but simply impersonal life. God gave it, and God takes it away. It returns unto God. It is the principle of life, the same in all God's creation.

The dust returns to the ground whence it was taken. It cannot be contended that this dust was personal before God breathed the breath of life into it. It was simply inert clay, like all clay. When God breathed into the nostrils the breath of life, man became a living soul. When at death the process is reversed, the soul, which was created by the union of the spirit of God with the clay, simply ceases to be—the union is broken up. The spirit returns to God who gave it, and the dust returns to the ground. Man is no more.

Thus God explained death to Adam. God had created him. If Adam did not desire life, if he chose not to obey God, He would return him to the ground whence he had been taken. He would cease to be; he would be as though he had not been. This is reasonable and just. Adam had been brought into being by the fiat of God. If he chose not to live, God would simply undo what He had done, and Adam would be no more.

It is not easy to defend the position which some take, that God instead of returning Adam to dust as He said He would, made Satan's lie come true: “You shall not surely die.” God does all things well. He wanted man to enjoy life; He created him to be a blessing. He did not create man for the purpose of having millions curse Him in hell throughout the years of eternity. Those who do evil must of necessity bear the responsibility of their deeds, but the time will come when sin and sinners will have an end, and God will have a clean universe.

Those who know that the Bible does not teach that man has an immortal soul may wonder how such a doctrine came into the church and came to be so widely believed. The Bible tells us that it was Satan who first questioned God's word that the wages of sin is death. He told our first parents that they should not die, and he told them for a purpose. There is probably no doctrine that has done more to turn souls from God than this doctrine of the immortal soul. A word will make this clear.

A God-dishonoring Doctrine

In another chapter we have discussed the God-dishonoring doctrine of eternal hell-fire. Although there is and must be a day of final reckoning, when the wicked will receive punishment for the evil they have done, it is contrary to all ideas of right and justice that this suffering shall be never ending. In punishment by fire the victims would ordinarily die in a short time. The doctrine of eternal suffering would compel us to believe, however, that God miraculously keeps these unfortunate people alive for no other purpose than to make them suffer! How long would a human being last in the fires of the last days? Only a little while. But instead of permitting him to die, God uses His life-giving power to enable him to suffer more! A day, a year, a thousand years? Will God's wrath never be satisfied? No, never. After an eternity has passed, the poor wretches are still alive, kept miraculously so by the power of God, and suffering excruciatingly for no purpose other than to satisfy the wrath of God. It would seem that the saints after seeing some whom they have loved and prayed for thus suffer for a millennium, could wish and pray that there might be an end to the spectacle, and might even ask God to terminate it. But no such prayer can or will be heard. The wicked must suffer on, and the saints will do their best to enjoy heaven while some of their loved ones continue to suffer the torments of the damned.

I fail to see how eternal bliss would be possible for the saints under such conditions, and I fail to see how any can believe that God's wrath will never end. Yet such is the result of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, a doctrine which finds no support in the Bible, but which was invented by the evil one in the Garden of Eden for the specific purpose of casting reproach upon the character of God. A more horrible doctrine cannot be conceived of by man or Satan. No wonder that millions have turned in horror from such a God. When Satan invented the doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul, he invented a masterpiece. It appears innocent, but is fraught with more evil possibilities than any other un-Biblical doctrine of which I know.

A Just Punishment

How much better to believe the Biblical account! There will be a punishment for those who fail to accept Christ, a dreadful punishment, but it will be a just one. “The wages of sin is death.” Romans 6:23. The wicked have proved themselves unworthy of life, and they are deprived of it. And this punishment will be final, irrevocable, eternal. Even as the righteous will have everlasting life, so the wicked will have everlasting death. They will never live again. They have chosen death, and death will be their portion. They will not suffer forever. There will not throughout the ages of eternity be a plague spot somewhere in the universe of God where the shrieks of the damned will ever ascend to mar the bliss of the people of God. There will be a clean universe. Sin and sinners will be blotted out. “There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” Revelation 21:4. Thank God that “these words are true and faithful.” Verse 5. The hell where the wicked have suffered will itself at last be destroyed. Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.” Revelation 20:14. I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.” Revelation 21:1.

A discussion of the fate of the wicked must ever be a distressing one. It is sad that men should choose death rather than life. Yet many do this. Let us not make it unnecessarily hard for men to believe in God by depicting Him as He must be if the doctrine of

the immortal soul is correct. Let us accept the teaching of the Bible in regard to the future of the wicked. Let us accept this teaching as it is in truth, not as it is perverted by Satan.

We now turn to a happier subject, that of the reward of the saints. They have chosen to obey God and the rules of life which He has laid down, and life everlasting, unending, blissful, will be theirs.

30. The Hereafter

The Meaning of Life

WHAT is the meaning of life? This question has occupied the mind of man since time immemorial. Only religion can give the right answer. If the grave is the end, life is not only meaningless but often cruel and unjust. One generation after another holds the stage for a little while, and then passes on to give way to others. There is an endless procession of individuals who live for a few years, learn a few lessons, and when they have acquired some little knowledge of life and may be presumed to have some notion of what is required of them, are suddenly gone. Apart from a hereafter, life is as meaningless and useless as a sewing machine operating without thread.

If, on the other hand, there is a life after this; if this present life is a preparation for a life to come; if life is given us that we may demonstrate how we will use it, then the present life becomes of supreme importance and meaning. If the use we make of the life here determines whether we shall have a larger and a better life in the world to come, life here becomes meaningful and worth while. Without such a view life loses its zest and becomes a purposeless groping among the ruins and relics of the past, ending with a leap into the dark. Only a belief in a future existence can give purpose and direction to life.

If it be admitted that a God exists who is just; if it be admitted that virtue is better than vice, and consideration and kindness are better than tyranny and cruelty, then the ground work is laid for a belief that vice will somehow and somewhere be punished, and virtue will somehow and somewhere be rewarded. A Creator who has justice as the foundation of His government, cannot permit vice to flourish and prosper indefinitely, and virtue to suffer. He cannot even be content with being neutral and indifferent. Only a Creator who encourages right and discourages wrong can lay claim to justice and the approval of mankind. The Bible asserts the justice and righteousness of God. We may therefore expect God to act in harmony with His announced attributes. He must punish sin, and by the same token He must reward righteousness.

Since virtue is not always rewarded in this life, or vice punished, we hold it fundamental to justice and to an adequate conception of God, that there must be a life hereafter. If this life were our only criterion, there would be no surety of the triumph of justice and virtue, or of the superiority of right over wrong. Without a resurrection all is darkness and confusion.

God's character demands that there be a happy future, and reason tells us that there is such; but we are not left to our own reasoning in this important question. God's Book definitely tells what will be the nature of our future existence.

Jesus was interested in helping man and in doing everything possible for his welfare here on earth. He went about preaching and healing, and bringing comfort and cheer to all. His message was the kingdom of God, which He proclaimed to be at hand. This kingdom was first of all to be established in the hearts of men, and its establishment depended upon men's acceptance of Christ as their king. As they accepted Him, they became members of the kingdom, candidates for immortality. Not all would accept Him; hence, the kingdom would not be universal. Only here and there would Christ find those who would adhere to Him. But as time went on, eventually there would be gathered a sufficient number to establish the kingdom in its outward form. When this number was reached, Christ would come to gather His own, and would take them home with Him to glory. Then He would remodel the earth, make it fit to become the home of the redeemed, and begin again where He was compelled to leave off because of the entrance of sin. The kingdom to be established would consist of only those who had stood the test, who were holy and good. It would be a kingdom such as this earth had never seen, a glorious kingdom, all sin forever banished and obliterated.

The Two Kingdoms

Christ's rule as king in the hearts of men is known as the kingdom of grace. The outward form of the kingdom to be established when Christ comes the second time to deliver His people, is known as the kingdom of glory. These two kingdoms are distinct and separate, the second, however, depending upon the first.

Upon conversion a man changes from evil to good. Sin has ruled over him; now he accepts Christ as the Man of his counsel. He opens the door of his heart and lets Jesus come into rule. Christ establishes His kingdom in the heart of the man, the kingdom of grace. His sins are forgiven, his life is cleansed, and he is made a fit dwelling place for the Spirit of God. The work of grace continues until the man has grown up into the stature of the fullness of Christ, complete in Him. Having finished his allotted life span on earth, he awaits the time when God will call the sleeping saints together. The trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised, and those who have done the will of God will come forth and, together with the living saints, be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and thus they will ever be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18.) Then begins the kingdom of glory. In this kingdom of glory all those will have a part who have here on earth been members of the kingdom of grace. They have had their sins forgiven. Now they are glorified. And it is of these glorified ones that the kingdom of glory consists.

It is this kingdom of glory with which we are concerned at this time. It is this to which Christ refers when He says: "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would

have told you. 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 you may be also.” John 14:1-3.

I go to prepare a place for you.” In visions of God, John the revelator “saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Revelation 21:2. The New Jerusalem is in a special sense the place that Christ has prepared for His people. In it is the tree of life, the one from which in the beginning God had excluded Adam and Eve. “He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” Revelation 22:1,2.

In this place God will again meet with His people as He did before sin entered. Of the Garden of Eden it is written, “The Lord God [was] walking in the garden in the cool of the day.” Genesis 3:8. Of the new earth it is written, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.” Revelation 21:3.

The Hereafter

Is there anything we may know of a surety with reference to the life hereafter? There is. Though many questions will remain unanswered until we arrive in that happy place, the Bible has given enough information to give us the essential features of the future life, though the highest imagination cannot picture that which God has prepared for His own.

One question that is often asked concerning the future is, “Shall we know each other there?” Not many people like to be in a place where they are not known and do not know anybody. Will we be so changed in the future life that no one will know us, and will others have so changed that we will not know them? Will we lose our identity to the extent that we will be strangers to all, and they be strangers to us? Such a condition would not be pleasant. And the situation would be still worse if, as some believe, we should be deprived of the memory of all former things. This would, of course, completely destroy our individuality.

With these questions is bound up another, namely, that of being pure spirits, incorporeal. Some teach this; others hold that our existence in the hereafter will be somewhat on the same plane as it is here. These questions we shall discuss together.

God in the beginning created man and woman, and placed them in a garden. Adam and Eve had no illusion as to their own existence or the existence of things objective to them. The garden in which they lived was real; the trees were real; so were the flowers and the fruit. The children born to them were real, and when death at last came to them, it was real. No one seems to doubt that Adam and Eve had existence as we have existence, or that there was any appreciable difference between their existence and ours. Surely sin did not cause such changes in their bodily structure that though they were pure spirit before sin, immediately after the fall they became physical beings with bodies of flesh and bones. They had physical bodies before sin.

Of this “Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Genesis 2:23. Sin caused changes in their minds and dispositions, but they were physical beings before the fall as well as after. The body was not a result of sin, God made Adam's body out of the dust of the ground before there was any sin.

A Glorious Body

From these considerations we may safely conclude that sinless existence is possible in the body. Any other conclusion would make God responsible for sin. God made Adam and Eve with bodies, and when He was done with creation, He saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.” Genesis 1:31. It is safe further to conclude that as God made man in the beginning, thus He intended him to be, and thus he would have continued to be had sin not entered. On this proposition-had sin not come in-there would now be a race of beings living without sin, beings not unlike what we now are in physical composition, men and women made in the image of God, capable of appreciating and associating with God.

Although this proof may not be complete, we think we are correct in believing that God in the beginning created all things as He wanted them to be, that He created Adam and Eve as He wanted them, and that sinless existence was possible for the first pair. The burden of proof is upon those who believe that after Adam and Eve had stood the test prepared for them and had not sinned, that God suddenly would have deprived them of their bodies, that the garden would have been transformed into a spiritual creation, and that life henceforth would be on a different plane. In their bodily existence they had communed with God, they had been sinless. Is there any indication that any change would have been effected in the absence of sin? I repeat, the burden of proof is upon those who believe that such a change would have been made. I prefer to believe that as God made Adam and Eve, thus He wanted them to be.

If it be admitted that Adam and Eve were flesh and bones, as Adam stated, and that under these conditions they communed with God and talked with Him face to face, the next question would be as to what difference, if any, sin made in bodily structure or composition. The only statement in the record that has any bearing on the question, even remotely, is the one that after Adam and Eve had sinned they saw that they were naked, and attempted to hide their nakedness. Had some covering which had previously shielded them been removed? Had their eyesight changed? Had bodily changes taken place so that they now were in possession of a body different from the one they had prior to sin? We are not told. The common theological concept is that the glory of God had covered them in their innocence, and that this glory had departed. In the absence of any clear statement from the Bible, we accept this view. There is no better explanation known for the problem.

If this conception is correct, it harmonizes with certain Biblical statements concerning what takes place when immortality is conferred on the saints. Then our body will “be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” Philippians 3:21. It is sown in dishonor; it is

raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” I Corinthians 15:43, 44.

These Scriptures mention a “glorious body,” a “spiritual body,” into which our present body will be changed. As the intent of the gospel is to restore man to his former or first status, we may reasonably suppose that at the time of the resurrection the kind of body which man lost in the fall will be restored to him. We do not know just what this glorious body is or how it functions, but there are certain conclusions which we may safely draw.

When Christ rose from the dead, He had a resurrection body, or as it is called, a “glorious body.” Philippians 3:21. In this body Christ showed Himself and communed with the twelve. They knew Him, they felt of Him, and He convinced them that He was not a spirit, but had real existence. (John 20:20, 2629; Luke 24:36-39.) He ate the food that was offered Him, and in general acted as though He were possessed of a real body. (Luke 24:40-43.) One difference is noted. At times He was invisible to them, and He had the power to appear suddenly. (John 20:19; Luke 24:30, 31, 36.)

The body which the saints will have will be like the body which Christ had. “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” Philippians 3:20, 21. From this it appears that the saints will have a body such as Christ had after His resurrection, and that this body will in many respects be like the present body, yet capable of functions which the present body does not have. This is perhaps as far as we can know anything for certain.

This, however, settles the question of our having a body in the future state. We shall not be disembodied spirits, any more than Christ was such a spirit after the resurrection. It is enough for us to know that “there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” I Corinthians 15:44. This spiritual body is the same as Christ’s resurrection body, His “glorious body.” The bodies of the saints will be fashioned like unto it. (Philippians 3:21.)

We Shall Know Each Other

As for the question, Will we know each other in the future state? We have Paul’s statement in I Corinthians 13:12: “Then shall I know even as also I am known.” Paul says that he will be known. He also says that he will know. This would seem to cover this point. We shall know each other there, and we ourselves shall also be known.

With this harmonizes the observation made by Luke that the two disciples on the way to Emmaus had “their eyes . . . opened, and they knew him.” Luke 24:31. If the point be pressed that they did not know Christ until their eyes were opened, we would make the observation that it was not the opening of their eyes that was miraculous but rather their closing. For it is written, “Their eyes were held that they should not know him.” Verse 16. God deliberately had their eyes “held,” as He did not want them to know Christ until the time came. When their sight was restored, immediately they knew Christ. In any event, it can hardly be contended that in the world to come our eyes will be “held.” We shall know even as we are known. The disciples knew Christ in His glorious body. So shall we. We shall not only know, but we shall be known. There will be no strangers in heaven.

We Shall Remember

What about our memory? Will we remember anything that has passed here on earth, or will all be forgotten? Does not the Bible state that the former things are passed away and will not come into mind? (Revelation 21:4; Isaiah 65:17.)

Some things will not come into mind, and some things will not be remembered. “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” Revelation 21:4. All that has to do with sin and sorrow and tears will have passed away. Whatever trials or dark experiences we have had will be forgotten in the great and exceeding weight of glory that will be ours. Such things will not come into mind. They will ever be of the past.

But there are some things which we shall never forget. Those things that belong to the gospel will not fade from mind. Will Peter and James and John ever forget the times they spent with the Master here on earth? Will they ever forget the sermon on the mount, the days and nights of ministry and healing, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, or the resurrection of Christ Himself? No, those events will remain ever fresh in their minds. It will be their joy and happiness to share with others the experiences of those never-to-be-forgotten days, and they will never fail of having an audience when they recount the story of the cross to which they were eyewitnesses.

Our individuality depends upon our memory. Should our memory ever fail us-as is the case in amnesia victims-we should cease to be ourselves. But this cannot be. Our happiness in heaven will be based upon the fact that we appreciate what Christ has done for us, based upon the experience of the few years which we spent on the earth. If the memory of those years is lost, we shall have no basis for our happiness. All will be a mystery to us, and we shall find ourselves in a place where others are happy and contented; but we shall not know why we are there.

This short earth life will constitute the ground of our blessedness in heaven. When the redeemed at last shall stand upon the sea of glass, having the harps of God, they will “sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.” Revelation 15:3. This song is the song of experience. They have gone through tribulation, and now they are recounting their experiences and their victories. How can they do this if they have forgotten all they ever knew of this earth? The truth is that they will forget that which ought to be forgotten, but they will remember all that ought to be remembered.

This little earth is the lesson book of the universe. It is here that the great conflict between sin and righteousness has been carried on. It is here that Christ died, it is here that men and women fallen in sin have recovered themselves from the snare of the enemy and have been saved by grace. Will the history of God's dealings with His people be forgotten, and will the actors have no remembrance of the part they took? Surely this cannot be. Forever and ever will the successive steps in the great plan of salvation be etched upon the memories of those who are participants in the great drama. The beneficiaries of the manifold mercies of God will not have blotted from their memories the ground of their hope. As long as eternity shall last, ten thousand upon ten thousand will repeat, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.' Revelation 5:12, 13. This can be possible only as they are conscious of having been saved by grace.

The New Earth

We have now settled three things: we shall be real beings, not merely disembodied spirits; we shall know each other; we shall remember of our earth life all that is worth remembering. These things are all vital. They assure existence on a plane that is understandable. They assure continuity of life and thought—we shall know whence we came and why we are where we are; they assure us of society with kindred souls who have gone through like experiences, and hence of bonds of sympathy and understanding that would not be possible were we to associate with another kind of beings who were not earth born. We shall belong to a company who have had like experiences and victories, and who have all been saved from sin as we have. We shall all be children of the King heirs of immortality.

Some questions now confront us. Where will the saints live? What will they do? How will they spend their time? Does the Bible give any light on these subjects? I believe that it does.

First, where will be the home of the saints? Will they live in heaven? To this I answer yes and no. Let me explain.

When Christ comes the second time to gather His saints, He will take them to heaven. "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." I Thessalonians 4:16, 17. The statement is here made that Jesus will descend from heaven, raise the dead, and take them with Him in the clouds, "that where I am, there you may be also." John 14:3. Here, in heaven, the saints shall live and reign with Christ. "They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (Revelation 20:4,6.)

These statements are easily understood. Christ is now in heaven. When he comes He will come from heaven. He will gather His saints and take them with Him to glory. There they will be with Him a thousand years. During that time they will be priests and will reign with Christ. This period of time is known as the millennium, which begins when Christ appears, and at the conclusion of which the executive judgment of the wicked takes place. After that the earth is cleansed by fire, sin and sinners are blotted out, and the earth is made habitable again. It is of this time that Peter speaks when he says: "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." 2 Peter 3:3-7.

The earth is "reserved unto fire against the day of judgment." This is more particularly mentioned in verses 10-12: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. In which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"

After the earth has thus been purified with fire, cleansed from sin, it will be restored to its original beauty, once more to become the home of man. "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." Verses 13,14.

The New Jerusalem Descends

John the revelator saw this "new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." Revelation 21:1. To this new earth the New Jerusalem descends. "I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Verse 2. There is no temple in the city, "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Verse 22. "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Verse 23. There also the saved shall be. "The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it." Verse 24. Christ's throne shall be in it. "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him." Revelation 21:3. The coming of Christ from heaven to this earth with the New Jerusalem is not a temporary arrangement, nor is it a visit merely. He comes to dwell with men. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Revelation 21:3.

Let us now sum up the statements. At the time of the resurrection the saints are taken to heaven to be with Christ. Here they remain a thousand years. During that time they reign with Christ, taking part in the judgment of the wicked. At the end of the thousand years the execution of the judgment takes place, and the earth is burned with fire and purified. The New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, and God, the Lamb, and the saints are in it. In the city are the saints. The throne of God will also be there, and the saved will walk in the light of it.

"There shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever." Revelation 22:5.

The earth was originally given to man. "The earth hath he given to the children of men." Psalm 115:16. The promise which Christ gave to the meek is that "they shall inherit the earth." Matthew 5:5. Although the saints will be in heaven for a thousand years, it will not be their permanent home. The earth was originally created to be the home of man, and when sin has forever been banished, it will fulfill its original purpose. For a while evil has reigned and Satan has had control. But it shall not ever be thus. God will make all things new. When that is done man will again have dominion, and the earth will blossom as the rose. Throughout the ages it will be the home of the redeemed, and thus will be fulfilled, in a somewhat different sense from that ordinarily given to the statement, that where sin abounded, grace will much more abound. This earth, sin cursed as it has been, will throughout eternity remain a lesson book to the universe. Here the great conflict between good and evil has come to its culmination, and here God will reveal His power.

God's Dwelling Place

The observant reader will have noticed that not only will the saints of God dwell on the earth made new but God Himself will be with His people and will be their God. This almost staggers the imagination. God's throne has ever been in the heavens. But now the throne will be here on the earth. "The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Revelation 21:3. "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." Revelation 22:3. There can be no doubt as to the wording and as to the meaning of the wording. God will be with His people. He will dwell with them. His throne will be in the New Jerusalem. He will be the light and the temple of it. "They shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads." Verse 4.

Christ has bound Himself to humanity with bands that shall never be sundered. The earth has been given to the children of men, and Christ, having bound Himself to us, will come with His own when this earth is given to the saints of God. Is this the meaning of the mysterious passage by Paul in Ephesians? 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 he 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 loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes 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." Ephesians 5:25-32.

The union between Christ and the church is here spoken of under the symbol of marriage. As Christ loves the church so men ought to love their wives. "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." The meaning of this verse is plain. There is no mystery about it. Yet Paul says, "This is a great mystery." What mystery can there be about a man's leaving his father and mother and being joined to his wife? How the two become one flesh may be a mystery, but apparently this is not what Paul has in mind, for he adds the significant words: I speak concerning Christ and the church."

The mystery is concerning Christ. He has united Himself to humanity, and the union is spoken of under the symbol of husband and wife. If the parallel is to be carried out, the time will come when Christ must leave the Father and be joined to the church. That time will come when the earth has been cleansed and given to the children of men. The saints have been in heaven a thousand years. Now the time has come for them to take possession of the earth which was originally given to man. Christ does not ask them to go alone. He goes with them. He is one with them. He is the Son of man. And so Christ comes down to earth to be with His own. His throne will be here. He will in a larger sense become Immanuel, God with us. He will never leave us. He has united Himself to humanity with such bonds that only marriage, the closest human tie, can adequately portray the union. But of such union the law says that a man must leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife. And so Christ leaves the Father and is joined to His own. This Paul calls a mystery.

But there is even more. Not only does Christ come down to this earth. The Father Himself comes also. "The throne of God" as well as of the Lamb, is in it. Revelation 22:3. Note again: "God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Revelation 21:3. When Christ leaves to come to this earth, God himself comes with Him. Wonder of wonders! God Himself shall be with us and be our God.

The Occupation of the Saints

As has been noted before, the saints will be real beings with the same kind of body that Christ had after His resurrection, and will not be disembodied spirits. After a millennium spent in heaven their home will be here on earth, and this will be their permanent abode. The next question to be considered is that of their occupation, how they will spend their time, and under what general conditions they will live.

As the saints will have bodies like Christ's resurrection body, it does not surprise us that the Bible speaks of life in the hereafter in terms with which we are familiar. Note the following: "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them: and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, said the Lord." Isaiah 65:17-25.

We should at this time give attention to verses 21 and 22. "They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them." This speaks of the new earth, as is plainly stated in verse 17. From this description it is clear that life there will not be unlike life here. But there will be this difference: "They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: ... mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands."

As it was in the Garden of Eden, thus it will be in the earth made new. But again there will be a difference. There will be no tempter, no sin, no sorrow, no tears, no death. All these things have passed away and will never be again. Happiness and contentment will be the lot of God's people.

No Self-satisfied Existence

It would be a mistake, however, to believe that the life hereafter will be merely a self-satisfied existence, where nothing ever happens and where life flows on tranquilly from age to age with nothing to do. Such existence might be welcome for a while, but it would not be satisfactory to those who have been redeemed and have always been about their Father's business. They must have work to do that will satisfy the inmost longings of their souls, work that will have some reference to that which has occupied their mind and strength in times past.

No man who has been engaged for a lifetime in teaching and preaching, or who has done common ordinary labor for a livelihood but whose real occupation has been the salvation of souls, will ever long be satisfied with building houses and planting vineyards, and doing that only. He will be anxious for real work, work along the line in which his deepest interests lie. He may be satisfied for a while in ministering to his own contentment. But it will not be for long. He might sit under the fig tree a few years, but even that will become tiresome after a while. Then what? Is there nothing to do, nothing that will be creative, that will be satisfying, that will minister to our own good and to the good of others? Is the life hereafter merely an unending attempt to make oneself comfortable, with no ambition stirring the soul, no goal to reach, nothing to call forth all the latent powers which God has implanted in the soul? It would seem that life under such conditions would fail of being satisfactory and would pall as the years roll on.

just what does heaven hold for such as wish to go on, ever and ever attempting new heights, ever striving for the beyond, never satisfied with present attainments? Or is the future life only for those who are satisfied, who have done their lifework and are enjoying their years in quiet peace and contentment, who live in the past and have no ambitions for the future?

Some will wonder if this is not too materialistic a view, will say that the future life cannot be conceived of in terms such as these. They hold to the un-Biblical notion that men will become angels or disembodied spirits, whose only occupation will be to hover around singing hymns, and that through all eternity there will be no variation. But if this view is discarded and the Bible discards it—then what will there be for the saints to do? Does the Bible give any light on this?

The School of the Hereafter

The original Eden was a school; God was the teacher, and Adam and Eve were the pupils. This school, which was interrupted by sin, will be continued when sin shall be no more. It cannot be contended that in the hereafter men will have nothing to learn, that they know all there is to know. Nor can it be contended that they will be unwilling to learn, or that God has nothing to teach them. Unless they have entirely different natures from what men have here, they will be anxious to learn more of the mysteries of godliness, more of the plan of salvation, more of the abounding grace of God. It would indeed be a strange situation for the saints to have no interest in the plan and purpose of God which has been hidden from the ages and generations, but which will then be made manifest. It would be still more strange if they had a desire to learn, but were given no opportunity to do so. All reason would therefore point to the probability of some provision's being made for the revelations and teaching of the deep things of God, that of which the saints during all their earth life have desired to have a deeper knowledge. It would seem mockery for God to implant longings in the human soul that are doomed to disappointment. The desires men have here to know God better, to learn more of Him and His plan, must somewhere find occasion for fulfillment. If not in the life to come, then where? Will the intense longing of the saints for the courts of God, for deeper drafts of the wells of salvation, forever be denied them? This cannot be. Heaven must provide that for which the soul yearns. God is not a mocker.

"God, who is rich in mercy, . . . hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Ephesians 2:4-7. In the ages to come" God will show "the exceeding riches of his grace" to us. This can mean nothing but that God Himself will be the

teacher, that we shall be the pupils, and that the subject will be the grace of God in Christ Jesus; in other words, the plan of salvation. This is exactly what we want, and this is exactly what God wants.

They Shall Hunger No More

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more.... For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters." Revelation 7:16, 17. There is no objection to applying these statements to physical hunger and thirst. But is there not also a deeper meaning? Is there not hunger that is not physical but still real? Is there not a hunger for righteousness, for knowledge, as deep and as strong and compelling as any physical hunger? "Blessed are they which do hunger ... after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Matthew 5:6. Is there not a thirst after God stronger than any physical thirst? David speaks of this when he says, "As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" Psalm 42:1, 2. Again he says, "My soul thirsts for thee, my flesh longs for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." Psalm 63:1,2. Here the hunger and thirst are explained to be a desire to see God's power and glory, "so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." These words are meaningful and important. Christ Himself invites man to come to Him; He, says, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." John 7:37.

With these texts in mind we are justified in believing that the statement that "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more," has reference to more than physical hunger. When the Lamb therefore "shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters," we may expect that Christ Himself will feed His people with the living bread and will give them copious drafts from the wells of salvation. This means that Christ will open to them the deep things of God, that He will satisfy their souls with good things, and teach them that for which their souls long. How satisfying, how wonderful, this will be! Truly, the mind of man can conceive of no higher joy!

I believe that this phase of the life to come needs emphasis. To some the future life is vague and indefinite. Heaven to them is faraway and unreal, and this life is troublous and full of disappointment. They would like to look at the future life with some degree of comprehension and understanding; but with the popular notions of disembodied spirits and a nebular existence, little comfort is hid from that source. How satisfying, therefore is the teaching of the Bible on this subject! God is real, man is real, heaven is real, the new earth and the New Jerusalem are real, existence is real, life is real, all is real. This assurance of a future life gives purpose and meaning to the present life.

www.CreationismOnline.com