VOL. 52, NO. 9 **SEPTEMBER, 1964**

The Berean Christadelphian

A monthly magazine devoted wholly to the exposition and defence of the Faith once for all delivered to the Saints, with the object of helping to make ready a People prepared for the coming of the Lord. Opposed to the unscriptural teachings of the papal and protestant churches of the world.

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"They received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many believed."—Acts 17: 11.

CONTENTS

ECCLESIAL NEWS: Richard ……Inside Front Cover
Following a Multitude ……Inside Front Cover
EDITORIAL: Approaching the Father ……257
THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM (Bro. Thomas) ……..259
THE DIVINE SONSHIP OF CHRIST (Bro. Roberts) ……262
The Object of Ecclesial Work ……..265
THE SMOKE OF THE INCENSE ……..266
LET NO MAN TAKE THY CROWN ……271
UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN ……..274
1964 Fraternal Gatherings: Toronto, California ……..279
THINGS TOO WONDERFUL FOR ME ……280
"I KNOW NOT THE MAN!" ……..283
LOVE NEVER FAILETH ……...285
A GOOD CONFESSION ……286
THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN ……..288

We are anxious to send the Berean FREE to any desiring it that way. Please do not hesitate to request it. If you know of any who might like it, please send us their names.

CHRIST IS COMING SOON AND WILL REIGN ON EARTH

Ecclesial News

RICHARD, Sask.

SINCE our last ecclesial news report, our brother James Truelove has visited Britain and returned home, having gained experience and a general knowledge of conditions that exist there.

On May 2, our ecclesia lost its oldest member in the person of sister Edith A. Jones, mother of the writer and our brother Arthur Jones of this ecclesia. Although we miss our sister greatly, yet we do not sorrow as those who have no hope, for we believe we shall meet again. We are by this reminded that the law of sin and death still reigns, but we look forward to the day its power will be controlled.

We would like to place on record our gratitude to brother John Randall for his presence and services at our Gathering, which helped to cheer and edify us. We are few in number, and appreciate the help and company of those who assist us in maintaining the Truth as we understand it.

We regret to report that sister King is not meeting with us at the present time.

To all of like faith, we send greetings, and to those who send the Christadelphian Visitor to all of us, we extend our sincere appreciation. —bro. Fred G. Jones.

Following a Multitude

"*Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.*" — Exo. 23:2

ONE of the most common weaknesses of human nature is the lack of ability to weigh the facts concerning any matter and come to a definite, just and unalterable decision, and the lack of courage to stand by any decision which one might make in the face of opposition by a multitude.

Such an attitude is usually caused from a lack of sound thinking, or superficial consideration of the facts, or by a lack of interest in ascertaining the actual facts.

The person who can properly evaluate the evidence and at the same time have the faith and courage to stand by his convictions regardless of what others may say or do, is one in a thousand.

The great majority grope in darkness and indecision, afraid to think or act without the approval of the multitude. This is true of things in general, and, sad to say, especially true in the realm of religion. Otherwise great multitudes would not supinely follow the way of popular religions and be "driven about by every wind of doctrine."

One of the most craven of all cowards is the one who follows a multitude to condemn the just and justify the wicked. The weakest in faith are those who smother their conscience in order to follow a multitude.

The strong in faith is he who is willing to stand alone, if necessary, rather than surrender one tenet of divine teaching or make one compromise with evil or error; to stand fast in what he believes to be true and just though all his associates are deserting to the multitude. —O.B.

EDITORIAL

Approaching the Father

"*This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh unto Me, and before all the people I will be glorified*"—Lev. 10:3

SINCE the first of the year, our Bible readings have taken us through momentous periods in the world's history. But it is not merely history—it is much more than that, for it forms part of those things that Paul says were—

"Written for our instruction."

It is our duty, therefore, not only to read what is written, but to give thoughtful attention to what we read, so that we will be properly instructed in the way of salvation. As Paul said to Timothy—

"Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" — 1 Tim. 4:13.

And (2 Tim. 2:15) —

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing (or handling) the word of Truth."

It will be seen that Paul was not thinking of ordinary reading, where one reads something without assimilating the ideas presented by the written word, for he uses the term "study." In this place, "study" means "to make effort, to be diligent and in earnest." That is, to APPLY OUR MINDS TO WHAT WE READ so that we will acquire that form of knowledge that will cause us to —

"Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"—2 Pet. 3: 18.

* * *

AMONG the many things we have read, let us look briefly into that period when David had become king over all Israel. One of his first acts was to gather a great company of the chosen men of Israel, and go to Kirjath-jearim to get the Ark of God, where it had been for many years in the house of Abinadab.

The record states that it was taken out of the house and placed upon a new cart which was drawn by oxen, under the care of Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab. When they reached Nachon's threshing floor, the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah, anxious about the ark, placed his hands upon it to steady it and keep it from falling. Because of that —

"The anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error (or rashness); and there he died by the ark of God" — 2 Sam. 6:7.

This judgment was so severe that David became afraid, and stopped the proceedings at once, and took the ark into the home of Obed-edom, where it remained three months. At first sight, this seems harsh treatment for one whose intentions were for good; but in many parts of the Scriptures we learn that God does not cater to our good intentions unless they are based on divine principles. We must remember that the whole course of action in transporting the ark was out of order. The charge given to the sons of Kohath regarding the method of conveying the ark, was —

"Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering Vail, and cover the Ark of Testimony with it:

"And shall put thereon the covering of badger's skins, and shall spread over it a cloth wholly of blue, and shall put in the staves"—Num. 4:5.

Whether these instructions were carried out, we do not know; but we do know that it should not have been placed upon a cart, for the staves were provided to carry the ark upon the shoulders of the Levites, and when doing this, EXPLICIT INSTRUCTIONS were given in the form of sober warning —

"They shall not touch any holy thing, LEST THEY DIE" — Num. 4-15.

This command was clear and unmistakable. Therefore it was the duty of Uzzah to see that the provisions of the Law were observed. Because he failed to do this, he suffered the **forewarned** penalty of the Law. This occasion would be included in Paul's remark in Heb. 2:2 that —

"Every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward."

Therefore, said Paul (Heb. 2:3):

"How shall we escape, if we NEGLECT so great salvation?"

"Neglect" — not deliberate wrongdoing, but just **neglect**. The death of Uzzah teaches us a grave and sober lesson regarding the growing tendency of many brethren and sisters treating divine things carelessly and improperly. You will recall that when Nadab and Abihu were struck down for "offering strange fire", Moses said —

"This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I WILL be sanctified in them that come nigh Me, and before all the people I WILL be glorified" — Lev. 10:3.

This incident occurred in the early stages of the establishment of that great divine system known as the Law of Moses, which Paul said was a custodian until Christ came. It was necessary, therefore, that God should enforce the discipline of the Law, and, especially, that which related to the duties of the priests.

When God sets before man the principle upon which He may be approached, THERE CAN BE NO DEVIATION FROM IT.

The principle ordained through the medium of Moses was clear. The high priest must approach Him with implicit reverence, and profound respect, mingled with devotion. What is our position? Peter says —

"We are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a purchased people; that we should show forth the praises of Him Who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light"— 1 Pet. 2:9.

As we look at the Christadelphian body in its entirety, do we see them all showing forth the praises of Him Who has called us to live in His marvellous light? Do we not see many of them indulging in godless habits, and empty past-times?

Instead of that they should be a holy community, adorned with spiritual beauty; a community wholly and eagerly dedicated to worship and service of God.

Our keynote must be "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD." The God we serve is unchangeable. What He was in the days of Moses, He is today. The Mosaic standard was—

"*I WILL BE SANCTIFIED IN THEM THAT COME NIGH ME*."

That is also the standard set before us. Have we the courage to face it? Think of what it would do to our characters, and our way of living, if we could keep that glorious conception of the Truth always firmly fixed in our minds and hearts! It must be done, or we will never share in those things that God has promised to those who love Him and keep His commandments. —Editor

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The Gospel of the Kingdom

In Relation to Existing Governments

Bro. Thomas, giving an account of his visit to Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1851, thus alludes to the lectures he delivered, and to their effects:

WE broke ground by showing that the subject matter of the Gospel was a Kingdom and the things related to it, which God intends to manifest in Palestine. It was therefore styled "the Gospel of the Kingdom"—glad tidings to every one that believes them concerning the Kingdom, through which blessedness comes upon all nations; and glory, honor, and eternal life to all who shall possess it.

We spoke also of repentance and remission of sins through the Name of Jesus, to all who lovingly believed this Gospel and were baptized into the Name of the Holy One. We unfolded the nature of the Kingdom; where it was to be, who were its subjects, and rulers, and what its covenants and dominion.

On week nights we called the attention of the public to Russia and the mission assigned it in the prophets; and to "England, Its future in Relation to Russia and the Jews."

ON the following Sunday, we spoke of the approaching overthrow of all governments, which were essentially usurpations of the rights of God, and political embodiments of the evil and sin of the world wherever they existed. They were incorporations of the power of those who, as the Scriptures say, "destroy the earth," that is, the people.

We showed that the purpose of God is to take possession of them, and to destroy the destroyers; and to assume the government of the world Himself, when the kingdoms shall become His and the King's whom He shall appoint to rule the world in righteousness; for the first time it will have been so ruled since nations and kingdoms have existed upon the earth.

This discourse seems to have fallen with some effect upon the sensitiveness of a portion of our hearers, being particular friends of the Queen's government. On Monday, Oct. 27, we received the following note from the Province Building, or Palace of the Provincial Majesty—

> "*Dr. Thomas was understood by some of his hearers on Sunday evening to reflect on existing governments, including that of Great Britain, in terms unfavourable to the allegiance of the subject or the support of authority. From such an imputation the writer has, to the extent of his influence, defended Dr. Thomas, although believing that his language might bear the construction mentioned.*
>
> "*Perhaps Dr. Thomas will not object to remove, in a brief manner, on Tuesday evening, the impression which his words conveyed, as it is presumed, unintentionally*."

The above was without signature; but from the messenger who brought it, it was ascertained whence it came. On Tuesday evening, which was our last lecture, we gave the explanation sought.

We readily admitted that we did reflect upon every government extant, imperial, regal, and republican; and should rejoice in succeeding to detach many people from allegiance to them.

By this, however, we did not mean to say that we would advise them to rebel against authority, or, if in state of rebellion that we would promote it. We inculcate the duty of all we succeed in detaching from their allegiance, being peaceable and quiet subjects of whatever government they may happen to live under; for the apostle saith:

> "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers."

We seek to transfer the allegiance of their hearts from the god of the world, his governments, and their honours and glory, to the God of the future state, to his King, and to His kingdom and glory.

We DO reflect upon the world's governments. They are all absolutely evil, and only relatively to one another good, better, and best.

They are usurpations of the rights of God, Who being the Creator and Benefactor of men, has alone the right to rule them for His Own glory and honor, which is impossible so long as the dominion of the world is in the hands of its present rulers. He gave men—

> "Dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth and upon every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

But he reserved to Himself the sovereignty over man whom he had—

"Created in His Own image after His Own likeness."

But they rebelled against Him, and the result thus far is the history of the past.

We reflect on all governments because, furthermore, they rule for the aggrandizement of their own selfishness, and not for the promotion of truth, righteousness, and the good of the people.

Still evil and wicked as they are, we do not wish to see them dethroned by the people, who would probably do no better. Yet if they did rebel, we would do nothing against them, neutrality in respect of all belligerents being the duty of a Christian until the Lord come.

We desire the establishment of a holy, righteous and just government over all the earth—a universal dominion that shall comprehend all nations, and make them sing for joy and gladness of heart, because of the blessedness they experience under its reign.

But this is at present impossible; for neither have the world's rulers nor the people, intelligence, wisdom, virtue, or power enough to accomplish it.

We, therefore, and all we can induce to swear allegiance to Jehovah's King, are passive and calm observers of events. We take part neither with the people nor their oppressors, but protest against the wickedness of both.

In Rome, Vienna, St. Petersburg, or Constantinople, though we abhor all their tyrannies with profound disgust, we—

"Render to them all their dues . . ."

—IF their demands do not necessitate the violation of the divine law, for—

"It is better to obey God than men,"

—come what may.

WE bide our time. We wait with patience the coming crisis—the time of action for the saints. The people and the governments will have fought out their battle when the Day of the Lord shall come. Down-trodden, crushed, destroyed, the ruled will be hopeless of redemption by the hand of man.

The triumph of evil and its wickedness will be great (Joel 3:13); but the power of Him Who shall bind and punish it will be greater (Rev. 20:2).

A glorious day will that be to them whom he shall honor "to execute the judgment written" (Psa. 149). The period of inactivity will have passed away; and the power of the enemy shall no longer "prevail against" the Saints of God. The sword of the avenger will then be committed to them, and—

"They shall take away his dominion to consume and destroy it unto the end" (Dan. 7:26).

* * *

AFTER this manner we removed briefly, (or perhaps, deepened!) the impression which our words conveyed on Sunday eve. We know not which.

In conclusion, we added, that the note in hand was quite an interesting and somewhat gratifying incident. It proved to us that we must be preaching a doctrine identical, or at least very much like that taught by Paul in days of yore. Thus he went to Thessalonica to preach Christ unto them, and in doing so they raised a clamour against him, declaring that he—

"Did contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another King, one Jesus" (Acts 17:7).

What would Caesar or his friends have cared about Paul's announcing "another king," if they did not understand him to teach that the country of dominion was that already ruled by Caesar, and that consequently the contemporary existence of Caesar's power and Christ's was impossible?

If the clergy were to preach the same Gospel, they would not be so popular with the Caesars as they are.

In fact, they would not be tolerated by them, for it was only when they confined King Jesus to the skies, and gave the world to Constantine and his successors that they ceased to be persecuted by the imperial power.

Let the clergy preach the Gospel of the Kingdom (but how can they preach that of which they are ignorant?) and they would soon find that absolutism would pass decrees against them, and democracy bribe lewd fellows of the baser sort to accuse them before the rulers; for persecution in some shape or other has ever been the fate of that proclamation which neither glorifies the great nor flatters the people, but announces the purpose of God without respect to either. —**Bro. Thomas, 1851**

WE BELIEVE that anything flavouring in any degree of the worldly spirit of "copyright," restriction or proprietorship in relation to written matter in exposition of the Word of God is contrary to Scripture and the spirit of Christ.

The Divine Sonship of Christ

PART FIVE

"*Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel*"—Isaiah 7:14

"*But how*" *it is asked*, "*was the birth of Christ a* '*sign*' *to Ahaz*?"

In seeking an answer to this question, it must be kept in view that Ahaz did not want a sign, and declined to ask one, and that this was not given at his request.

The birth of Emmanuel by a virgin was a sign **volunteered by the Deity**. This is important, because it suggests that a wider scope would be given to it than would have pertained to a sign requested for private uses.

The circumstance of the moment to which it had relation was a confederacy between Israel and the Syrians, to destroy Judah. This was the peril which elicited the divine assurance that the enemies of Judah should not prevail, of which the sign was the birth of Immanuel.

Now, taking the comprehensive view of this which is justified by the fact that it was a divine pledge, we can see it go beyond the days of Ahaz, and extend to all the perils that should beset the house of David. The birth of Immanuel is the guarantee that the house of David shall be delivered from all its enemies, and triumph to the ends of the earth.

The assurance of this event served the purpose of the moment, for before Christ was even born, "the land which Ahaz abhorred was forsaken of both her kings." When the virgin Mary "brought forth her firstborn son," Rezin and Pekah were rotting in the dust.

But while thus answering the purpose of the moment in affording a basis for the assurance that Pekah and Rezin should not succeed in their plot against Jerusalem, it furnished a **general pledge for all time** that God would manifest Himself in a son of David, and in him, be with Israel for the taking away of their sins and the destruction of their enemies.

The sequel of the prophecy gives it this comprehensive bearing. Days of evil are predicted (Isa. 7:17) future to the time of Ahaz, when, through the vast depopulation of the land, there would be abundance of field produce for the few survivors (v. 22).

The triumph of Assyria, not only over Damascus and Samaria (the sources of Judah's then immediate danger) but over Judah itself, is foretold—

> "He shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over; he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching-out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O IMMANUEL"
> (Isa. 8:8).

Then a confederacy of nations against Judah is contemplated in the indefinite future—

> "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken to pieces; and give ear all ye of far countries; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces:
> "Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand; for GOD IS WITH US" (v. 10).

Here the birth of Immanuel ("God with us") is distinctly associated with the final triumph of Israel over every hostile combination.

That this is the scope of the prediction becomes more and more evident with every verse in the prophecy, which begins at the beginning of chapter 7 and extends to the end of chapter 9. Immediately after the verse last quoted (8:10), the prophet is warned (vs. 11-12) not to participate in the panic which then prevailed with regard to the hostile alliance of Ephraim and Syria. He is instructed (v. 13) to fear Jehovah, and not the enemy, who will come to nought, and there is coupled with this injunction a prophetic reason which directly lays hold on the days of Christ—

> "He (Jehovah) shall be for a sanctuary; but (in the first instance) for a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and many of them shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared and be taken" (vs. 14-15).

Now, in Jesus (whose very name intimates the part Jehovah played in his mission), Jehovah IS a sanctuary of refuge, both in relation to present individual wants and the future salvation of Israel.

But in the first aspect of his manifestation, he became a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. His appearance among them was the occasion of the greatest catastrophe that ever befell the nation. They rejected him and were destroyed.

> "They stumbled at that stumbling stone" (Rom. 9:32).

The sequel to this stumbling-stone effect of Immanuel's manifestation is indicated in the prophecy thus (vs. 16-18)—

> "Bind up the testimony; seal the law among my disciples; and I will wait upon the Lord, Who hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.
> "Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders," etc.

In this, we have depicted the confirmation of the promises in the death of Christ, and their establishment as a living testimony in the persons of those believing the Gospel through the preaching of the apostles; and, furthermore, the withdrawal of Christ to the presence of the Father, and the relation of Christ's brethren to the Jews, as signs, if they could but read them.

There is no speculation in these applications of the prophecy, for almost every part of it is quoted in this way in the New Testament (Heb. 2:13, I Pet. 2:8).

Then follow (8:21-22) the dreary interregnum of the times of the Gentiles, culminating (9:1-4) in the breaking in of joy upon the nation, through the supernatural breaking of the power of the enemy—

> "For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise and garments rolled in blood, but THIS shall be with burning and fuel of fire.
> "FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN (here is the final application of the Immanuel prophecy), UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN.
> “And the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father the Prince of Peace.
> “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice, from henceforth even for ever.
> "The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this" (9:5-7).

Then (9:8) the prophecy reverts to the immediate danger to Judah from Rezin and Pekah's designs, showing that the scope of the sign of Immanuel with which it opens, extended to the days of the Messiah, who alone could answer to the name, and who, assuredly has been born of a virgin.

* * *

AFTER the sign of Emmanuel (having reference to God's general and ultimate purpose with the house of David) there is introduced by a "moreover" (8:1) the sign of Mahershalalhashbaz, whose name imported ruin upon Ephraim and Syria, who were confederate against Judah.

This child was purely an omen of evil. His birth guaranteed the destruction of Judah's then active enemies, but did not, like the other, bring with him a pledge of Judah's triumph over all future perils.

He brought no indication of God being with them. His name ("In making speed to the spoil, he hasteneth to the prey") was purely a token of strife and rapine, to be directed first against Syria and Ephraim, then against Judah, and afterwards to be turned back from the house of David, on account of Immanuel, the child born, and the son given, whose name ("God with us"), should be called Wonderful, etc."

Rationalism confounds Immanuel with Mahershalalhashbaz, and Josephism follows it in the mistake, from a natural desire to get rid of so potent a testimony to the miraculous conception, as is contained in the words applied to Immanuel.

The effort is unavailing. The two are distinct. Isaiah's son was a pledge of calamity; Immanuel is the "dayspring from on high"—the intervention of the Almighty—the arm of the Lord—God manifest in the flesh, for the great purpose which is the only joy of men—the purpose to take away the sin of the world, extirpate the evils, physical and political—to which it has given birth, and fill the earth with glory.

* * *

THE Josephite denies that the genealogy of Luke is that of Christ through Mary, affirming it to be Joseph's, in the line of his father.

Of Mary he makes nothing. He declares the attempt to prove her to be of the house of David a failure. For the purpose of his argument, Mary is a stranger, and not of the house of David at all. He claims it is in Joseph that the genealogical purity centres. He says—

"*He* (*Joseph*) *is of David, by father and by mother, but not so Jesus. The genealogies are given to prove the genuineness of Joseph's descent. It is in him that the two lines of David end. Christ's purity is broken by the intervention of the stranger, Mary, who is not of the house of David at all*."

One would almost imagine that Joseph was to be the Messiah! Has it never occurred to the Josephite that if it was important for Joseph to be of pure Davidian descent, it was no less so for his son, who was to be heir to the throne; and that if it was necessary for Joseph to have father and mother

both descended from David, it surely was as much so for Jesus who was to be the true bearer of the Davidian glory?

It would really seem that the exigencies of his theory have made him lose his bearings, and landed him at the shrine of Joseph instead of "great David's greater son."

"*But* (*he says*) *you only allege—and do not PROVE—that Luke's genealogy is that of Mary*."

And what does **he** do? He alleges that it is the genealogy of Joseph; he does nothing more. He asserts that his view is right, it may be said that one assertion is as good as another. In the abstract this is true, but where collateral facts are brought to bear, it makes a difference.

Now, the collateral fact in this case is that the New Testament alleges Jesus to have been born of Mary, without Joseph, an allegation which is borne out by every subsequent allusion to the origin of Jesus, and therefore if Jesus is a pure descendant of David, Mary must have been of the house of David.

Hence, on the face of it, one of the two genealogies must be that of Mary. It is for the Josephite to prove that it is Joseph's; the onus lies upon him. He asserts it is so; further he cannot go; and further the other side cannot go upon the exclusive merits of the genealogies.

The point must abide the determination of the wider and more general question whether Jesus was the Son of God or the Son of Joseph. The evidence on this question is so conclusive that all minor questions, such as that raised on the genealogy, must fall in, and take rank under the great conclusion that—

"Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH, IF THE LORD WILL

OBJECTS OF ECCLESIAL WORK

THE OBJECTS of ecclesial operations are two-fold: 1—the edification (or refreshment, encouragement, strengthening, or building up) of its individual constituents in the faith—"the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4:16); and 2—the exhibition of the light of truth to "those that are without."

In his two-fold capacity, the ecclesia is "the pillar (that which upholds) and ground (that which gives standing room) of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). These two objects will always be carefully pursued by enlightened and earnest men. Neither is to be lost sight of, and neither sacrificed to the other. Edification is the more agreeable: but the testimony of the Truth is equally a dutiful function. We must, therefore, resist the tendency to exalt the former over the latter; and, at the same time, be equally on our guard that we pursue not the latter to the sacrifice of the former.

There is a tendency in young ecclesias to give the public testimony the more prominent place; and in older bodies, perhaps the tendency is to prefer that which is individually profitable to that which may seem to them a bootless exhibition of divine matters to a heedless public. A right condition of things gives both an equal place. Duty to Christ will sustain older ecclesias in a course from which their individual preferences would withdraw them: and the need of comfort, and the luxury and service of worship, will help the younger bodies to give due place to breaking of bread and exhortation,

—THE ECCLESIAL GUIDE

The Smoke of the Incense

"*Men ought always to pray, and not to faint*"—Luke 18:1

THERE is one appointment of the service of God which, though briefly mentioned, has a very important place in the Mosaic economy and which carries an important typical significance for us today. It is the use of incense in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle.

The details surrounding the compounding of the material of incense and the law of its use are very exact and fall under the strict appointment of God when He said that all things should be according to the pattern shown in the Mount.

The incense which was used was compounded of very aromatic substances, finely ground together, resulting in a material which would give off an acceptable odor in the Tabernacle when fire was placed under it from the altar of burnt offerings.

The offering of incense was prepared and placed on the Altar of Incense morning and evening, outside the Veil, toward the Mercy Seat, which constituted a perpetual odor arising in the precincts of the Holy Place. The High Priest was particularly commissioned to perform this service with strict instructions against any others presuming to do so unbidden.

* * *

WHAT then do these details and the events surrounding this ordinance convey to us by way of exhortation?

The very nature of incense and the way it rose as a cloud in the Tabernacle speaks not only of the acceptable sacrifice of Christ in the eyes of God—

"This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

—but also of the prayers of the righteous as they rise before God, being directed toward our Mercy Seat, Jesus Christ. Yet we are not left to conjecture upon this matter, for frequent reference is made to just such a comparison in other places of the Word of Truth. David says:

"Let my prayer be directed before Thee as incense."

Christ in the Revelation makes this application and association of prayer and incense. Speaking of the opening of the Seventh Seal and the consequent judgments upon the wicked world, such judgments are represented as being in answer to the prayers of the righteous—

> "Another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the **prayers of all saints** upon the golden altar which was before the throne.
> "And the smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God out of the angel's hand" (Rev. 8:3-4).

The feature of the entreaty of the righteous toward God for the fulfilment of His plan of redemption is repeatedly stressed in the Scriptures. Though the righteous are always before the eyes of God and He ever watches over their needs and cares for them in every respect, still Christ earnestly besought us to remember the urgency of prayer by the use of the parable of the unjust judge.

The parable illustrates that even an unjust person if entreated long enough will be moved by supplication. This being the case how much more will the Father speedily avenge His Own elect! Therefore it is concluded that (Luke 1-18)—

"Men ought ALWAYS to pray, and not to faint."

Consequently the righteous are pictured as crying unto God night and day, a continual incense before God, a constant supplication and thanksgiving for His mercy, His protection and provision, and His manifold goodness to the children of men.

These considerations are in harmony with the ordinance of the continual burning of incense in the past. In the first place, none must presume upon the mercy and benevolence of the Creator. We cannot take God for granted even though God knows our necessities far better than we may ever know them. He desires, yea, is well pleased that we approach Him making known our righteous, godly and

honest desires from the heart unto Him in the appointed way. David comprehended the desires of the Lord in this matter, and so declared—

> "Praise ye the Lord. O ye servants of the Lord, praise the Name of the Lord!
> "From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the Lord's Name is to be praised" (Psa. 113:1-3).

The advice of Paul is very much to the point—

> "Pray **without ceasing**. In **everything** give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thess. 5: 17-18).

It is well for us to repeatedly try to enumerate and give thanks for daily blessings we receive at the hand of God. It makes us continually conscious of the Source of our help. David repeatedly reviewed the history of his people in this light and came to the conclusion that **there was a NECESSITY that men should continually praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men** (Psa. 107)—

> "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord."

Thanksgiving—a consistent, lifelong overflowing of Thanksgiving toward God—is the only pleasing, the only acceptable, the only POSSIBLE frame of mind if the glorious truth of the Gospel is embraced and comprehended with both heart and mind.

Paul admonished Timothy that God was the Provider of all things, and all were acceptable if received with thanksgiving by them which believe and know the Truth (1 Tim. 4:3).

Paul carries his point further when speaking of the collection for the needy believers at Jerusalem when writing to the Corinthians. He illustrated that God had blessed the Corinthians in temporal things, but that it brought great opportunities for them in respect of their brethren, **to the rendering: of thanksgiving to God not only by the giver, but also by the receiver** (2 Cor. 9:12)—

> "The administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God."

* * *

THE rendering of thanks and praise unto God is not a matter for casual concern or occasional remembrance. This is well illustrated by two features of the Law. The offering of incense was a continual appointment and the preparation of the incense was to result in a finely, evenly, consistently pulverized compound; nothing lumpy or irregular would suffice. Therefore we must give diligence to the thoughts we direct to our Heavenly Father. Says James (5:16)—

> "The **effectual fervent** prayer of the righteous man availeth much."

So we must be conscious **always** of the mighty and gracious Source of our blessings, and continually ascribe the glory and praise which is due alone unto God as unto Him in Whom we live and move and have our being. In this we shall indeed prove acceptable to God.

Yet with the repeated bounties of the hand of God, we are still inclined to lose sight of the greatness of God's love and care.

As Jesus was passing through Samaria and Galilee upon one occasion he saw ten leprous men standing beside the way. When they implored his aid, he gave them instructions for the cleansing of their lamentable condition. As they carried out his instruction one noticed his healed condition, returned to Christ, and with a loud voice glorified God. Christ marvelled that **only one** had returned to give thanks.

The lesson is pointed for all, and searches us with the thought: Do we remember to thank and praise God for His goodness, or are we of the nine lepers class who thoughtlessly receive God's goodness and pass on unheedful of the mercies we receive? The Gospel writer closed the incident with the words—

"And he was a Samaritan."

—a casual expression, yet one full of meaning for the unheedful, unfruitful Jewish race. It was directed at the exalted, man-glorifying, superior Pharisees, and taught that they completely missed the spirit of the Law, while they strained at its letter.

The Parable of the Pharisee and the publican fits this picture well and portrays right principles and a correct estimate of ourselves in approach to God. God knows all the circumstances and all the state of heart. To God belongs the glory, not to man. Said the Pharisee—

"I thank Thee, Lord, that I am not as other men are."

Vain, exalted person! But—

"God be merciful to me a sinner!"

—said the publican. The incense of the latter was well prepared of the correct ingredients and rose before the throne of grace as a sweet-smelling savour. Solomon in wisdom declares—

"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the righteous is His delight."

* * *

THOSE things which do not harmonize with the plan of God or do not declare the truth in relation to man are similar to the admixture of foreign substances in the incense, and the use of strange fire in causing the combustion of the incense.

These processes were strictly prescribed and specified in relation to the priests in the past, and have a definite bearing upon the true believer today. The fire which was to cause the incense to send forth its acceptable odours was to be taken from the Altar of burnt sacrifice. This was an important injunction as will be seen from the consequences of departure recorded concerning Aaron's two sons Nadab and Abihu.

The fire from the Altar represented the consumption of sin in the flesh by the sacrifice of Christ. It prefigured the redemptive work for the human race effected by the perfect life of obedience even to the death of the cross. It is a cardinal point in the whole transaction.

The use of the fire from **this** Altar for the burning of incense inseparably links the true believer with Christ, not only in the matter of his burial and death by baptism, but also of the mortification of the deeds of the flesh, the crucifixion of our old man and his former lusts, the entrance upon a new life of acceptable sacrifice in all things.

From those who are related to Christ by the appointed means and in consequence of their deeds of service to God, there will arise an odor well-pleasing to the Father. The incident of Nadab and Abihu clearly shows that God can only be approached through the Saving Name of Jesus, by those who are expressly called to salvation by a knowledge, belief and obedience of the will of God.

These men presumed upon a service which did not relate to them. The High Priest was expressly detailed to perform the service of caring for the incense. Not only so, they missed the main point behind the operation, that in the flesh dwelleth no good thing, and that a humble recognition of its state comes before acceptable approach is made to God.

To miss this point is to presume upon other means of salvation than that which is clearly set forth from Genesis to Revelation. Such is entirely foreign to God Who is supreme and Who dictates the terms of salvation for man. And He in consequence will ultimately visit eternal death upon the presumptuous one.

To Nadab and Abihu the service of God did not appeal in the seriousness which it entailed. **They chose to serve God in a manner which they preferred themselves**. Is there not great warning for all of us in these things? God stands supreme in the Universe now as then. His requirements of conformity to His will are as immutable as they ever were.

Though He does not openly manifest Himself as in the days of Moses, yet His witness of Himself in the earth is clear and unmistakeable and leaves all without excuse. Therefore we, in espousing the cause of Christ, accept no insignificant or secondary undertaking.

It is of prime importance to all to see that the requirements are carried out as God has decreed through the mouth of His Son and the apostles. Indifferent service will not do. We are servants to God and He requires service from the heart in everything. **Whatsoever we do, let us do it as unto the Lord!**

God's judgement in the matter of the sons of Aaron may seem severe upon a first consideration. But we must remember that it was the final result which was important in the eyes of the Creator. If He winked at this infringement, a basis for further departure from His will would have been established and His righteousness ignored.

Herein His love is shown that His ways are unswerving and form a basis of confident trust for those who truly seek Him in sincerity. Does not this warn us also against accepting standards of truth and righteousness that are below divine precepts?

The product of the fire of Nadab and Abihu was strange and repulsive to God. So the works of those who profess to be followers of Christ, yet who do not give their whole heart and mind to His service will be just as strange and repulsive.

Israel of old arrived at such a condition that they honoured God with their lips but their heart was far from Him. Consequently God advised that the smell of their feasts was obnoxious unto Him and He desired not their sacrifices. God complained that they had robbed Him in the matter of their offerings; not that they did not perform the service literally, but **their hearts were not in it**. They chafed at His requirements instead of seeing the necessity, the love, and the beauty of Divine arrangement.

Turning to ourselves in respect to these considerations, we also have been called out as a separate and peculiar people. Responsibilities of a serious nature rest upon us, whether young or old. To the young, full of zeal and enthusiasm, comes a cautioning note that energies must not be misapplied by an incorrect basis of labours, as personal pride, or misguided ambition.

Yet also it might be a lack of due consideration for our brethren and sisters who are working together for the well-being of the body of Christ. **Fundamental principles must be maintained that the whole body does not ultimately suffer.**

To young and old alike there may be a tendency to minimize the gravity of our high and holy calling. Perhaps years of familiarity have dimmed our senses to the blessed position in which we stand. Yet again we may have felt the importance of ourselves in the service of God, that we are inseparable elements in the working out of the plan of God. Caution is required in all our ways, for by unobserved trends in our lives we may come to offer strange fire to our Heavenly Father.

Our calling is too important, our salvation too great to miss by false steps. Such a blessing the world does not possess, nor can it possess it except according to Divine standards.

Our position is the greatest blessing that anyone can possibly receive: yet being possessed also of human nature as we all are we must guard against familiarity and common-place regard of the things of the Lord.

Uzziah, king of Judah, comes to us as just such an individual to illustrate our point. He followed in the precepts of God many years in his life. However, being lifted up by the blessings God

caused to come upon him, he lost sight of God in his own importance. He presumed to offer the incense upon the altar in the Temple, which was a conformity with the practice of the kings of the world surrounding him, when they were victorious

Herein, though doubtless well-intentioned, he sinned grievously in ignoring God's way to follow the way he himself thought right, and he was smitten with leprosy and set apart from men to the lingering day of his death.

Let us not in any matter cause ourselves to so lose sight of our humble position before God that we temper the will of God with what we deem expedient by a knowledge of the world, and its ways.

We must seek to honor God by constant concern for the performance of His Will—attendance at the meetings of the brethren and sisters whenever possible, **giving our minds wholly to the object of our meeting**, whether to the daily readings, the exhortation, or the celebration of the Lord's supper—constant SELF-EXAMINATION in the light of the Spirit-Word.

By so doing we shall retain in mind the prime object of our various arrangements and the Divine beauty behind them. The more we are exercised in this way, the more likely we shall be to retain constantly the true relation of ourselves in God's sight and consequently prove acceptable in all our offerings.

Yet the bearing of this point does not cease with our assembly together. It carries on in every department of our walk before God. And this is all-embracing. It regulates ALL we do, say, or think. Performance of the will of God gives scope for the qualities of each individual, which indeed vary with each servant of God. Nevertheless service to God will find employment for the hearts and minds of every true servant.

In all things however we must analyse **the motive behind our service**, whether we are pleasing our own desires or catering to our own wishes, rather than performing a work which will advance God's honor and glory. Only by strict adherence to the place of God in our lives can we hope to please Him and finally receive approval at the hands of His Son.

Our weekly assembly to rededicate our lives to the service of our Elder Brother provides an excellent opportunity to examine the motives behind our actions, yet this should be a continual process.

Let us once again determine that our service to God shall be pure, lovely and of good report, not mixed with strange ingredients or foreign materials. Then shall we be performing the sacrifice of praise unto God and He will be pleased with the sweet savour of our offering. —F.H.

Let No Man Take Thy Crown

"*Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip*"—Hebrew 2:1

THE apostle Peter exhorts the elders which are among the ecclesias to do certain things, so that—

> "When the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a CROWN OF GLORY that fadeth not away."

Now, a crown is a symbol of kingship and of victory. Peter continues—

> "I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:
> "Feed the flock of God which is among you" (1 Pet. 5:1-2).

What was the food that Peter had in mind? No doubt he had in mind his conversation with the Lord shortly before his ascension. This took place at the sea of Tiberias. In John 21:15 we find Jesus saying—

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?
"He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.
"He saith unto him, Feed my lambs."

No doubt, by these words, Christ was instructing Peter to take especially tender care of the young in the ecclesia—the young in years and the young in spiritual experience. The second and third times, Jesus said to him—

"Feed my sheep."

"Sheep" would refer to the more mature of the flock. None must be forgotten or overlooked, though the lambs need especial care.

We know that Peter did this very faithfully, even unto death, according to the Master's wish. His labours and love for Israel, both natural and spiritual, are recorded in his two epistles. He is known as the apostle to the Hebrews. He speaks of the "food" for the lambs and the sheep in his second epistle—

"According as His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue."

The daily food is the Word of God—the knowledge and instruction of the Holy. It is essential for our salvation that we realize that daily partaking of, and meditating upon—ruminating—"chewing the cud"—are vital to our spiritual health and acceptance with God. He **will** be honoured in those that approach Him. He insists upon spiritual preparation and development, to the best of our ability. We **must** feed. We **must** grow. We **must** advance from milk to meat.

The apostle Paul has something to say regarding the crown in Heb. 2:19—

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, CROWNED with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man . . ."

—Now, there is a qualification to the "every man," because Jesus himself says in Matt. 20:16, "Many are called, but few chosen"—

". . . For it became Him, for Whom are all things, and by Whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering" (Heb. 2:10).

Therefore, because of the greatness of our need and helplessness, and the greatness of the love and sacrifice offered for us, we are admonished by the apostle to—

"Give the MORE EARNEST HEED to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

"More earnest heed" is what we all need. The days flash by, and the present is so pressing, but like all who have gone before us, the brief day of our probation will soon be over, and we shall stand at the judgment seat. As we stand there, "more earnest heed" will stand out as the only reality in a world of vanished shadows and memories.

Paul solemnly reminds the Corinthian brethren (1 Cor. 9:24)—

"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but ONE receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain."

Just running—just being in the race—is not enough, though many seem to think it is. We must "so" run as to receive a prize. He continues—

> "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they (the athletes) do it to obtain a **corruptible** crown, but we (the runners in the race for life) an **incorruptible**."

It is sad that men of the world will put more effort and self-discipline into their striving for achievements than many who seek the greatest prize of all. ALL things of the present—all labours and strivings and sacrifices and studies and trainings—are for a corruptible crown, a trinket not worth the effort, a few short years of glory or possession at best. But we have been offered ETERNITY—if we have the wisdom to lay hold on it. James says (1:12)—

> "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the CROWN OF LIFE which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."

All He asks is that we love Him. But this is everything. The love He asks is utter devotion—a complete giving of the life, as Jesus gave his.

* * *

THE glad message proclaimed by the Spirit to the ecclesia in Philadelphia was—

> "I will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world . . . Behold, I come quickly. Hold that fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

It is possible for our precious crown of life to be taken away from us. What a tragedy to let such a priceless treasure slip through our fingers!

A "crown of glory" has been promised to David, when Christ will sit upon the throne of David in Jerusalem—

> "The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David: He will not turn from it: Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.
> "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation.
> "There will I make the horn of David to bud, I have ordained a lamp for Mine Anointed.
> "His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish"
> (Psa. 132:11-18).

The same beautiful theme runs through all the prophets. Throughout, the conception of the crown is prominent. The crown represents the chiefest excellence—that which overshadows all in glory and beauty and joy. The prophet Isaiah portrays the beautiful picture of the restoration of the kingdom and its capital city—

> "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.
> "And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness and all kings thy glory. And thou shalt be called by a new Name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.
> "Thou shalt also be a CROWN OF GLORY in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God."

Throughout the New Testament, too, the crown symbol is brought before us in various aspects, from the "crown of thorns" and suffering we all must first wear, to the "crown of rejoicing" which is promised to those who have the wisdom to follow the thorny, self-sacrificing path of obedience that leads to life.

The apostle Paul, leaving us a zealous example of devotion to the Truth, leaves us also this confident assurance—

> "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith.

"Henceforth, there is laid up for me a CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only but unto all them also that love his appearing." —F.G.

Unto Us a Child Is Born

"*And they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed*"—Acts 21:5

THE Bible has much to say about children. Men and women are told to consider children, and to learn from them in many ways. They are also told to observe in children many things that must be avoided, put away, grown out of, overcome. Unfortunately, our natural tendency is to cling to the faults of childhood and to quickly grow out of its virtues.

Children are the great type of our relationship to God, and God's to us—

"As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

The main purpose of our life is to grow up, to develop, to learn, improve, mature. We must be constantly growing up—

"Unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

In this respect we are always children—always growing and learning. When we cease to grow and learn, our lives cease to have any meaning or purpose. We become just another comfortable vegetable.

* * *

From the beginning, The Child—the Seed of the Woman—was the heart of the promise of redemption and reconciliation—

"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders."

The birth of a child was always an occasion of great joy.

The children born to Israel received the token of the Covenant on the 8th day after birth. Here is emphasized the importance of the child in the national pattern, and their special position before God.

So we find the children of believers today stand in a special relationship to God, and therefore come under a special responsibility, for where much is given, much is expected. God blesses children for the parents' sake. What greater blessing than to be enlightened in the Truth, and to be invited to become sons and daughters of God?

* * *

WE are taught, both by instruction and example, that children should be early and constantly brought into contact with the things of God, so that their minds will naturally develop in harmony with this atmosphere.

At the end of his long parting address to Israel, comprising the book of Deuteronomy, Moses instructs them that every 7 years there must be a national assembly for the reading of the Law. He says (Deut. 31:12-13)—

"Gather the people together, men, and women, and children . . . that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law.

"And that their children, which have not known anything, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God."

Children are not ignored in the Scriptures. Their instruction is an important factor in the continuity of the purpose.

Similarly, in Neh. 8, where we have an example of the fulfilment of this command to assemble to hear the Law, the presence of the children is specifically referred to (v. 2)—

> "And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding."

As soon as they were old enough to get anything out of it (which is quite young, if they are properly instructed at home) they should be there.

In Acts 21:5 we have a different type of occasion, but the same principle illustrated. It is when Paul took his departure from the brethren and sisters at Tyre—

> "And they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed."

These incidents are recorded for our instruction. Children should be included in all aspects of ecclesial life. We cannot hope to reap what we do not sow.

Beside attendance at the assemblies of God's people, children are to be taught constantly at home. Israel was instructed through Moses, in Deut, 6:7—

> "These words . . . thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

The application of the principle of these commands to our present time is clear. Children should be at all meetings possible, if we have any regard for their salvation.

They should always be given the good example of parents putting ecclesial activity first in their lives, attending and cheerfully supporting every ecclesial activity they possibly can.

Without a good consistent, personal example, instruction is powerless and meaningless hypocrisy which children will see through and despise. And the daily assembly around the Word for the Bible Readings will be carefully nurtured by all parents who have true love and concern for their children.

If we do our part, then—and THEN ALONE—can we reasonably expect God to do His. The Spirit commands through Paul (Eph. 6:4)—

> "Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

This is a solemn charge and obligation, calling for much time, and effort, and dedication. This will not just happen of itself, if just left to itself. Nor is there any use in vain regrets when it is too late. The command is clear. The scriptural examples are clear. The Word of God leaves no doubt as to the greatness of the effort and devotion called for, for the promised blessing to be fulfilled—

> "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

* * *

CHILDREN are spoken to directly in the Bible. Of the 10 commandments which God personally spoke to Israel with His Own Voice upon Mt. Sinai, one was especially for children—

> "Honor thy father and thy mother."

The apostle Paul points out, in writing to the believers at Ephesus (Eph. 6:1-3) that this is the first command that has a promise connected with it. Actually it is the only one of the 10 with a promise.

It is thus especially suited to, and designed for, children. It gives a reason and an incentive for the command. It is always best to take the time and trouble to explain why, if possible. Then children can grow in comprehension and obey intelligently. Paul says—

> "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.
> "Honor thy father and thy mother (which is the first commandment with promise) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."

When he says—

> "Obey your parent in the Lord."

—he does not mean that parents must necessarily be in the Lord before we must obey them. He means the **obedience** must be in the Lord—for the Lord's sake— in harmony with his will. We must be subject to our parents because the Lord has appointed it.

In the same place he has a very important instruction for parents (V. 4)—

> "Ye fathers, PROVOKE NOT YOUR CHILDREN TO WRATH."

Discipline, to be beneficial, **must** be in the spirit of love and kindness and self-restraint. We must control ourselves first, before we can presume to control anyone else. A harsh, hasty, bad-tempered parent cannot expect to develop a gentle, reasonable, good-tempered child.

But the child must obey the parent—whether kind or unkind, just as the servant must obey the master whether he be fair or unfair. Why? Because this is what God has appointed, and this is well-pleasing to Him, and manifests a living faith in Him. Peter says (1 Pet 2:18, —

> "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the perverse.
> "For this is acceptable if a man for conscience toward God suffer wrongfully."

This is a deep and searching precept, and is one of the many that are designed to manifest the difference between those who are shallow and fleshly-minded, and those who are deep and spiritually-minded.

So obedience to parents is a direct obligation to God. Obedience will bring happiness and benefit, disobedience will bring only sorrow upon ourselves. It is foolish to think for a moment that we can get happiness and satisfaction in any other way than the way God tells us. Is it not obvious foolishness to think that we can prove that God is wrong?—that we can outwit Him? There is only one way to true peace of mind and full enjoyment of life as God intends us to have it.

* * *

THE Scriptures say many things about children. They teach many lessons by means of children. One of the most significant is the occasion on which Jesus said (Matt. 18:3)—

> "Verily I say unto you . . ."

—this expression is used to emphasize vital and fundamental truths—

> "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted—changed—transformed—and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven.
> "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of heaven."

The distinction is between natural childlike humility and false grown-up pride—between a recognition of complete dependence and a false assumption of self-dependence and independence.

A little child is completely dependent—leans upon and looks to the parent for everything in the fulness of faith, quite naturally and without any thought to the contrary, without any illusions or assumptions of self-sufficiency, without any thought of proud independence.

But as soon as there is any development of personal awareness, there is a beginning of pride and self-assurance. The serpent nature, the "pride of life," soon becomes manifest.

Pride is the ruling passion of human nature, and it is considered a great virtue to be self-dependent. Small-minded people take great pride in not being dependent upon others. But how fleshly; and foolish this is, when examined in the light of the Spirit's teaching!—

"No man liveth to himself."
"The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee."
"What hast thou that thou hast not been given? And if thou hast been given it, why dost thou glory?"

Even Jesus himself said—

"I can of mine own self do nothing."

We of ourselves can do nothing that is really worth anything. We must reverse the world's proud folly, and become as little children—recognizing our utter dependence upon God and upon one another—our utter natural helplessness and uselessness, of ourselves. Every breath we take is the gift of God. If He should withdraw His sustaining power from proud man for a moment, man would perish like a crushed worm.

It is hard to unlearn the habits of a lifetime—to shake ourselves free of the ugly mould into which the whole fleshly world endeavours ceaselessly to shape us like itself.

There is so much pride in our position, in our ability, in our accomplishments, in our possessions, in our appearance—so much time and effort lavished on decking and draping these poor, corrupt, perishing forms of clay.

How pitifully empty all these things are in the light of eternal truth! Most of the world's interest and activity and effort is wrapped up in empty-headed glorification of the flesh and human appearance and accomplishments, but—

"Unless ye become as little children—humble yourselves as little children—ye **cannot**—ye CANNOT —enter the Kingdom of God."

We have to go to VERY little children for the example, because the trend of pride starts early.

* * *

BESIDE obedience to parents, we find other divine instructions especially addressed to children. Solomon says (Eccl. 12:1)—

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

This is the only true wisdom, and yet how far the world is from it! God, if He exists for them at all, is some vague, far-off conception.

But God must be an ever-present reality with us. There must be a continual consciousness of God in all our thoughts. An effort to be in harmony with God in all our thoughts. To develop this, it helps to keep reading the Psalms of David, which reflect the mind of Christ.

God is the very source and center and purpose of life. We do not begin to live at all, in any true sense, or to know the meaning of life, until we have established God as its center. Until we have established God in our lives we are merely animals, living just by the natural motions and feelings of

the flesh, like dogs. Most people in the world never rise above this natural, animal condition. They never really live at all.

But God in His love calls us to rise up to a much higher and more beautiful life—a life with depth and meaning and purpose and future.

"Remember NOW thy Creator in the days of thy youth"
— remember — constantly keep in mind.

This is the best and most helpful advice anyone could possibly receive.

* * *

BESIDE obedience to parents and always remembering God, children are instructed to learn wisdom and understanding. As babies we are born knowing nothing—our mind a complete blank. We must gradually develop an understanding and a character. Solomon says again (Prov. 4:1-13)—

"Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.
"Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.
"Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee; Love her, and she shall keep thee.
"Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: Keep her, for she is thy life . . ."

Wisdom is to learn about the world around us—not just the world of itself, but where it came from, why it is like it is, what its purpose is, what the end is to which God is bringing it, and above all, how we may shape our lives so as to fit into that great purpose of God.

We see people being born, and we see them dying. We see ourselves in the midst of the same process. Is that all there is to it?

For most people, that IS all there is to it. They run their sad little course, so quickly over, mostly weighed down with problems and disappointments, and then like sheep they are laid in the grave forever. They live and die mere animals. How sad it all is!

But God does not desire it to be that way. He wishes men to have life and have it more abundantly, and endlessly. He wants them to seek true wisdom and understanding, and He wants them to begin as children—as early as possible, that their lives may be full and rich as possible.

* * *

THERE is one very important occasion in the life of Jesus when children suddenly come into prominent notice, and are found fulfilling a necessity wherein the most prominent of their elders fell sadly short. In Matt. 21:15-16 we read—

"And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David, they were sore displeased, and said unto him,
"Hearest thou what these say?
"And Jesus saith unto them, Yea, have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?"

The children, though limited by their natural ability as to detailed depth of comprehension, were far more in harmony with the broad sweep of circumstances than the intensively learned doctors of the law.

There is a great lesson here. It is so easy to get things out of balance, and become so immersed in self-glorying technicalities and intricacies that we miss the great and living realities. Doctrine truly is essential, but the Truth of God and the Way of Life is so infinitely **more** than mere doctrinal definitions. It is the power of godliness and the spirit of holiness, the perfection of love and the perfection of beauty.

This incident directs our attention to another instruction especially addressed to children. They are called upon to PRAISE GOD. David says (Psa. 148:1, 12)—

“Praise the Lord . . .
"Both young men and maidens, old men and children...
"Let them praise the Name of the Lord, for His Name alone is excellent, His glory is above the earth and heaven."

What is praise? What does it mean to praise the Lord?

Praising is not just a form of words or an outward exercise. It is no praise for God just to have words of praise coming out of a tape recorder or a record player.

Praise is a LIVING CONDITION—a joyful and thankful state of the mind and heart.

We may remember God, we may keep Him in mind as the central reality of life, we may acquire knowledge and understanding of Him, but if all this does not lead us to be filled with praise and rejoicing in God, it is no good to us. It is mechanical. It is lifeless.

We must be filled constantly with the joyful spirit of praise. It must be the air we breathe, the influence we radiate. God is a Person, a Father, a Center—not only of wisdom and power and righteousness and truth—but of love and goodness and kindness and joy.

The people of God—the TRUE people of God—are a glorious, joyful family, rejoicing in love for one another and for the Father of Love Who has called them all unto Him.

Most people are too wrapped up in themselves to praise God. Their own little circle of activity is all their cramped little minds can reach out to.

They never learn how to live in the largeness and fulness of life. Their potentialities for spiritual growth and expansion lie dormant and useless, like the wings of a caged bird. They are the miserable prisoners of their own self-centeredness. This can happen to any of us.

But the spirit of praise opens the doors of the cage, and lifts us up to the vast heavenly expanse, and all the petty problems of the present shrink below us into insignificance.

Praise to God is the mind's great healer and purifier. It is no meaningless coincidence that the last 7 Psalms are all dedicated to this glorious theme, and that the final words are —

"*Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord*! *PRAISE YE THE LORD*!" —G.V.G.

1964 Fraternal Gatherings

(If the Lord Will)
TORONTO: October 10 & 11
Write: Bro. G. Gibson, 294 Glebeholme Blvd., Toronto 6, Ont., Can.
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA: **November 27, 28 & 29**
Bro. E. Higham, Ap 2, 1729 Raymond Hill Rd., S. Pasadena, Cal. 91030

Things Too Wonderful for Me

"*Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth*?"—Job 38:4

JOB'S life was a righteous life, suddenly visited with overwhelming and unexplained adversity, yet we read this simple testimony of him—

"In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

One thing above all we can observe in the life of Job, and that is that it brings to the front the truth of the words we so often hear—

"That through much tribulation shall we enter the Kingdom of God."

As it was in Job's case so let it be in ours—

"That the trial of our faith worketh patience, and patience experience and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us."

Peter says (1 Pet. 4:12)—

"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 ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

Yes, the wonderful truth ever revolving on its axis—trial, faith, and reward.

* * *

JOB was the best and greatest of God's servants in his day (Job 1:8), yet he had lessons to learn, that he might be a greater servant still—his Faith made more strong, his Hope more dear, his Love more deep. Like the perfectly well-pleasing Master, he must—

"Learn obedience by the things he suffered."

Job was a patient man. His name today has become synonymous with that wonderful virtue which we call patience. And the great and glorious hope that hung in Job's heaven and which we can hang in ours, is recorded in his writings (Job 19:25)—

"For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth."

"I KNOW!"

There was no "may be" or "perhaps," but a ring of assurance come what trials or afflictions, joys or sorrows, that may and can fetter us to the ground—

"I KNOW that my Redeemer liveth and shall stand at the latter day upon the earth."

Such was the motivating power in Job's life which kept him looking upward and onward in a life of trial and adversity.

It may seem rather strange perhaps that the words of chap. 19:25, should be found about half way through the record of Job's trials. Yes, a light to urge him on to reach his goal—the brow of the hill in his afflictions, and that lamp behind him to steer him gently downward to those green pastures, and besides the still waters of God's redeeming grace.

Job KNEW that his Redeemer liveth, and thus neither height nor depth, principalities nor powers, things present nor things to come would cause him to swerve from that hope and from the path he had chosen to tread.

As we read chapter after chapter of Job speaking his mind, we cannot fail to be impressed with the fact that as far as he was concerned there was only one great issue in life, and that lay between God and himself. All other matters were quite unimportant. It was his own individual responsibility to his Creator which to the patriarch Job was paramount.

* * *

BRETHREN and sisters, let us be forever thankful that this story of Job's trials and the perfecting of his faith is included in all the Scriptures that we are blessed with, for guidance and instruction and comfort and inspiration.

For here is a man blessed with all the good things of life, wanting for nothing in a material way. He is styled—

"The greatest of all men of the East."

As such he wielded a great influence and authority, as we read in Job. 29:7-10—

"When I went out to the gate, the young men saw me and hid themselves, the aged arose and stood up, the princes refrained from talking, the nobles held their peace."
"Unto me men gave ear, and waited my counsel" (v. 21).
"Blessing those ready to perish, eyes to the blind, father to the poor, and seeking counsel for what he knew not" (vs. 13-16).

Then comes the sorrowful story of his destruction. His property all swept away, and then the heavy blow of having his whole family destroyed at a single stroke.

Our minds reel at the contemplation of such a catalogue of calamities. Here he is, deprived at a single blow of every worldly possession, but nevertheless, without hesitation, falling down and worshipping God and saying—

"Blessed be the Name of the Lord!"

What a great lesson this is for us when calamity and disaster seem to come upon us. In the spirit of Job let us be constrained to say—

"Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him."

He must have been deeply affected by these great and overwhelming disasters, yet his sorrow had nothing of bitterness or revolt, but was tempered with faith almost unparalleled in history.

Yet worse was yet to follow. He was deprived of bodily health and strength with which he could have set to work to restore his lost possessions. Words almost fail us in adequately speaking of Job, yet the lessons are great in the riches they afford in giving us spiritual strength in the trials we have to bear. Although advised by his own wife to "Curse God and die," he rather confided in God, beautifully and humbly recognizing God's right to give or take away.

* * *

WHEN Job's friends came to comfort him they did not know him. The Job that they had known was reduced to a state of a mass of corruption, life only evident in the fact he could still breathe and talk.

The shock to them was so great they wept, and Job's grief was so great they could not speak. When they were able to say something comforting to Job their conclusions were of Job that he was wicked. Eliphaz asks (Job 4:7)—

"Who ever perished, being innocent?"

Bildad said (2:11)—

"Can the rush grow up without mire?"

And Zophar adds his "miserable comfort" (11:6)—

"Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth."

How often does man conclude in his own thoughts that the wicked shall only receive evil, while the righteous must always be materially blessed in his ways! How wrong is this conclusion, as witnessed in the life of the greatest man who ever trod this vale of tears! He said (Matt. 8:20)—

"The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

The taunts were hurled at him:
"Physician, heal thyself."

Truly the righteous shall come into great affliction, as witness both Job and the Lord Jesus. Yet the Lord saved them out of it. Let us then, in the quietness of our souls, be encouraged by the lives of these great men. Job was blessed at last, after he had endured all in patience and faith.

His life affords us a great lesson. In the anguish of his heart and soul he said (14:13)—

"O that Thou wouldst hide me in the grave!"

Yet he asks the question,
"If a man die, shall he live again?"

And he answers with assurance:

"All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come."

Where was he to wait? In heaven? No, in Job 17:13 he said—

"If I wait, the grave is mine house."

Let us take comfort and cheer then from the life of Job. Though his friends attributed his calamity to wickedness, yet God told those same men to go to His servant Job that he may offer prayers on their behalf.

* * *

WE may ask WHY this faithful man was tried. Job also asked this question more than once.

God, in His gracious answer, gently directed Job's attention to the infinite marvels and beauties of Creation which are so overwhelmingly great that God's dealing with His children should be above question. As God said to Job—

"Who provideth for the raven his food? Even his young ones cry unto God; they wander for lack of meat."

What a challenge to every one of us in our study and search to find God! Is not Creation sufficient to show the great arm of God as the seasons come and go? Creation should be our answer to God's greatness and His goodness. Yes—

"He sends the snow in winter
And the pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruit in the garden—
He made them every one."

This is Paul's unanswerable argument in Rom. 1. To all not blinded by the pride and evil of the flesh, or perverted by "education," the evidence of God in Creation is inescapable, and so, Paul says—

"They are WITHOUT EXCUSE" (Rom. 1:20).

* * *

AS we turn to the closing chapter, we find Job acknowledging God's greatness in a flood of thankful, worshipping humility—

"I know that Thou canst do EVERYTHING, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee."

Job had wrestled through the darkness of the night, and had overcome. He was humbler and wiser, and deeper in his love and comprehension of God's infinite wisdom and goodness.

Truly, brethren and sisters, as we look at the life of Job we can take comfort. We can, in the spirit of Job, also say—

"I know that Thou canst do everything!"

It is no secret what God can do. What He did for Job, He can and will do for us.

God gives and God takes away; blessed be God, our Father! God is able to bless us in this life and in the life that is to come. May it be ours to gain approval of God, as did Job, that when Christ who is our life shall appear, we may also appear with him in glory. —W.J.P.

"I Know Not the Man!"

"*Whosoever shall be ashamed of me in this sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father*"—Mark 8:38

RECENTLY our readings have taken us through Mark, and the record of that sorrowful event of the apostle Peter's denial of Christ. He had vowed vehemently that he would not forsake nor deny his Lord and Master—

"Although all shall be offended, yet will not I."

And again—

"If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise."

There is much we can learn from any portion of the Word of God, so let us examine more closely this small portion we have under consideration and endeavour to extract the lessons it holds for us and how they may apply to us.

After Peter told Christ that he would not deny him, Christ warned him that—

"Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice."

Christ knew the weakness of the flesh, for he was made like unto his brethren—

"In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

The weakness of the flesh soon became apparent in the events that transpired in Gethsemane. When Judas had betrayed Christ by his kiss to the multitude (who took him away to the high priest) then the disciples "all forsook him and fled."

Peter, who had protested that he would go with him even unto death, "followed afar off."

Truly the spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. No doubt Peter was torn between his desire to be with Christ and console him, and the fear of being apprehended himself, so he "sat without in the palace." A damsel confronts him—

"Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth."

"But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand what thou sayest."

And another maid saw him and said to them that stood by—

"This is one of them."

Would we in word or deed deny our Saviour as Peter did the second time?—

"I do not know the man" (Matt 26:72).

Perhaps we would not say so in so many words, but the way we live and the way we act can certainly proclaim our denial as loudly as words—

"*Ye are my friends—IF YE DO WHATEVER I COMMAND YOU.*"

* * *

"And after awhile came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them, for thy speech betrayeth thee.
"Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man!
"And immediately the cock crew."

What a bitter moment for Peter! The crowing of the cock called to mind the words of Jesus a few hours previous. He failed as Christ said he would, and he went out and wept bitterly.

Have we not all had these moments of failure as did Peter? We start out with such good intentions to do what is right, but we find that in a little while we have failed completely, and we are in the depths of despair.

We realize that the Scriptures have plainly set forth a guide as to how we should act and what we should say and do that will cause our light to shine forth in the darkness. We know that doing the will of God sets us apart from the world, yet how prone we are to forget the commandments as we go out into the world to earn our daily bread, or to shop, or whatever the occasion may be.

It is so easy for our actions and speech to take on the colour of those around us.

Does our speech "betray" us? Does it betray us as being the friends of the world, or does it let others know that we are friends of Christ, because it is—

"Sound speech that cannot be condemned."

Let us heed the words of James in regard to the tongue, that little member of our body that can do so much harm. He exhorts us to keep our tongue under strict control, for he warns that misuse of it can defile the whole body.

* * *

ALTHOUGH Matthew and Mark record Peter's denial of Christ, there is one detail that is added to the picture in Luke's narrative. After Peter had denied Christ the third time, Luke says—

"The Lord turned and looked upon Peter.
"And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice."

We can imagine how Peter must have felt when Christ's piercing gaze rested on him. The time is near at hand when Christ will look upon us . . . at the judgment seat. Will his glance bring joy and pleasure, because we are approved, or will it cause sorrow and shame as it did to Peter on this occasion?

Peter, as we know, later strengthened himself so that he was able to follow Christ faithfully. We will not have the opportunity to change once we stand before Christ and he has judged our works.

The time to be faithful is now. Let us not be among the defiled who profess that they know God, but in works deny him. We know that if we deny Christ he will also deny us. Let us rather **deny ourselves**, and take up our cross and follow Christ. —J.P.

Love Never Faileth

"*Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing*"—1 Cor. 13:2

When Jesus was asked—

"Which is the great commandment in the Law?"

—he gave love of God and the brethren and all mankind as the basic principle upon which all service and worship of God must be rendered if the law of God is to be fulfilled in our lives. He said—

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:40).

By that statement Jesus meant what the apostle Paul says in the passage quoted above (1 Cor. 13:2), that any knowledge or faith that we may have is not counted to us for righteousness and adds nothing to our favor in the sight of God unless love is the controlling and all-pervading influence from which all our thoughts and actions spring—

"Love is of God" (1 John 4:7).

We can only know the meaning of love, and manifest it in the scriptural sense in our lives, by drinking freely from the source and fountain of life and love, which is open to us in the revelation of the mind of God in His Word.

It is in this sense that "love is of God," for from no other source are we able to make this beautiful, divine attribute a part of our own characters.

Jesus prayed the Father—

"I have declared unto them Thy Name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:26).

In this passage Jesus is saying that the instructions and teachings which he gave his disciples concerning the Father were for the purpose of developing in them the same divine love which the Father had for His only begotten Son. Thus the Father, the Son and the disciples would be united in holy communion one with another, with unfeigned love as the motivating force in all their relations, thereby transcending and overshadowing the baser elements of the flesh.

In such a pure relationship as this—in which the Father loves us as He loved Jesus, because we have learned to love and obey Him—there is nothing more be desired. If we can secure and keep the love of God, who holds the universe in His power, we can have that confidence and peace of mind that cannot be disturbed by anything that man can do.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 4:9)—

"But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another."

It is said that "God is Love." He is the author and fountain of love, and as we read His thoughts, precepts and purpose in His Word, we drink of this fountain, and so become taught of God to love one another.

It is not mere knowledge and understanding of things divine that the Scriptures are designed to teach us. These are necessary, but if this knowledge fails to touch the heart and kindle within us the divine attribute of love, we have missed the whole purpose for which the Word was given to us.

> "Now the end (aim, purpose) of the commandment is charity (love) out of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved (marg: not aiming at) have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm" (1 Tim. 1:5-7).

As we understanding the ultimate purpose of God with man on the earth, as elaborated in His promises, we are able to visualize the community of the redeemed with Christ as their head, and God dwelling with them through His Spirit, as a body of people that have learned to love one another.

They are there because the love of God, as exhibited in His Word, has become the controlling attribute of their hearts. Thus they are prepared to live together, under God, in unity and peace, with never a cloud to disrupt the harmony and joy that will be theirs forever.

Divine love manifests itself in the lives of God's people, as explained by Paul in 1 Cor. 13—

> "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; vaunteth not itself, is not provoked, thinketh no evil;
> "Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.
> "Love never faileth."

Also in this chapter Paul spoke of the time when the Spirit gifts would be taken away, but he adds—

> "And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love."

The characters of the saints who are to be associated with the Lord Jesus in his Kingdom will be wrought out and built up on the basis of the attributes Paul mentions here. They will be like the Lord himself of whom it is said (John 15:13)—

> "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

If we can develop, through the indwelling Word, such a love as Jesus had, God will preserve our characters to eternity. —E.W.B.

A Good Confession

"*Lay hands suddenly on no man*"—1 Tim. 5:22

THE household of faith is united by one common bond, being all members of one Body, whose increase unto the edifying of itself in love is dependent upon the effectual working of the individual members of the Body. The whole Body is honoured and strengthened in proportion to the integrity and zeal of each member, but it is also dishonoured and weakened by the inconsistency and laxness of any within it.

We are abundantly admonished to preserve the purity of the faith, to strive together for that end as much as possible, in peaceful relations with all men, but still in conformity with the divine order—first pure, then peaceable. Peace is obtainable only in the absence of a disturbing element. Where that element exists peace is more or less impossible.

From what cause do disturbances in the ecclesias generally spring? With whom do they originate? Is it not generally from the action of brethren weak in the faith, men who retain something

of the old leaven which tends to leaven the whole lump, so that many are led to follow their pernicious ways? It is the heresy "privily brought in," which affects the soundness of the faith and disturbs the effectual working of the members of the Body. Experience has shown that envying, strife, railing and evil surmisings originate with such minds and are stimulated by them.

Who are to blame for this state of things? Examining brethren are largely responsible. To them is entrusted the charge of keeping pure the Household of Faith so far as admitting the alien to fellowship is concerned.

But there have been admitted to fellowship some who were practically deficient in a knowledge of the first principles of the Faith. This has been proved by many who subsequently came to see with increased knowledge that they had in the first place been immersed with a deficient knowledge of the truth, and without an adequate recognition of their responsibilities in becoming connected with Christ's brethren.

With their new light and knowledge, these good and honest hearts were anxious to be placed in a proper relationship to Christ, and hence they sought re-immersion—an acknowledgement that their first immersion was invalid. These had gone on to perfection, but how many may be like them in their first experience, having need to be taught again what be the first principles of the oracles of God?

Admission to fellowship is obtained by baptism; but baptism ought only to be performed upon an understanding of the one Faith being shown by the candidate, and a **recognition on his or her part of the responsibilities of the step about to be taken.**

It is for the examining brethren to determine whether such an understanding and recognition exists, because it is upon these that the validity of the immersion depends.

It is here that the responsibility of the brethren is greatest. There is unfortunately in many cases a desire, laudable in one sense, to see an increase in numbers, and sufficient care is not always taken to ascertain the motive which leads to the wish to become connected with the ecclesia, and an accommodative examination is made in order that one more may be added to the roll.

It is hoped that the candidate will understand the subjects better afterwards, in the meantime, with an imperfect knowledge and with little appreciation of the responsibilities of the step being taken, there passes into the fellowship of the Household one that may prove a root of bitterness and a cause of offence.

The Church of God, the pillar and ground of the truth, has a duty to itself as well as to those outside, and if into the Holy City there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth or worketh abomination, it is surely necessary as far as possible to keep out similar elements of the world from the Household of Faith. The examining brethren must see to this.

There is no need for austere judgment or Pharisaical treatment of the candidate for immersion in attempting to secure this object. In the gentlest manner, but with the firmness which the importance of the occasion requires, the examining brethren should deal with all the points of doctrine, and where there is deficiency let them show the way of God more perfectly.

But if it is evident from the manner of the candidate that he or she fails to comprehend the import of the doctrine, there should be delay in admission.

The mere intellectual grasp of the facts is, however, of less importance than the perception of the responsibilities of baptism.

Let the death which baptism symbolises to the individual be clearly impressed upon him as his dying to his former carnal life, and that in his rising into newness of life in taking Christ's Name he also takes his yoke upon him, learning to follow his footsteps, to cultivate his mind and disposition, so that they may dwell in him as they dwelt in Jesus.

Were these things gently yet gravely set before all who come before the examining brethren, there might be fewer who would accept the conditions of fellowship, but these would be less likely to cause heart-burnings and strife in the ecclesias with which they become identified.

The subject is of great importance to the peace and welfare of the ecclesias, and these reflections are offered in a spirit of love to such as are the door-keepers of the House of God.

—Christadelphian 1889.

The Commandments of Men

MARK CHAPTER SEVEN

"*Then came together unto him the Pharisees and. certain of the scribes. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault*"—Mark 7:1

THIS is one of those many incidents in the life of Jesus where he clashes head-on with a well-established custom of the Jewish people, to refute it as being contrary to the true custom established by God through Moses and repeated by the prophets.

This is perhaps the hardest lesson of all for us to learn—standing up against the crowd, against flesh-pleasing, well-loved, popular traditions and customs—to witness FOR the Truth and AGAINST lies.

The charge made against some of Jesus' disciples was that they were eating with "defiled" hands, which had to be explained by the Gospel writer as meaning "unwashed" hands.

Why should the Pharisees and certain of the scribes find fault? This was, in the eyes of the Jews, a very serious matter, and not merely a matter of etiquette and good manners—

> "For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.
> "And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not.
> "And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables" (Mark 7:3-4).

We can all the more realize how serious the nature of this "fault," this "defilement" of unwashen hands, was and how entrenched and respected was this custom in the time of Jesus, when we are told of one Rabbi Eleazar ben Hazar who was ex-communicated by the Sanhedrin (the supreme council of Jewish Nation), on the charge that he undervalued the washing of hands. At death, because he remained unreconciled, he was buried in disgrace.

History abundantly testifies how the great burden of tradition hung over every petty detail, even to how the towel was to be arranged. It is a great warning to us against smallness of mind and unbalanced fanaticism. Truly the natural mind of man runs to every extreme of foolishness.

> "Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him,
> "Why wash not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?" (Mark 7:5)

This is what was foremost in their mind, the tradition of the elders. And to refer to it as the tradition of the "elders" gave it the weight of prestige necessary to make it serious. The term "elders" implied everything they represented: character, authority and rulership in things spiritual, setting them forth as leaders and examples to be emulated by the people.

"He answered and said unto them, Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written,
"This people honoureth 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, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do" (Mark 7:6-8).

It is so easy for us to slip into this same fatal error—"I think this," or "I do not think that," instead of humbly and painstakingly studying what God has recorded for our guidance to eternal life, and faithfully trying to obey it without regard to the foolish thoughts and desires of the flesh.

These "traditions and commandments of men" were actually set above the Word of God. Extracts of such Jewish teaching of the time give us instances as follows—

"*The words of the scribes are lovely, above the words of the Law; for the words of the Law are weighty and light, but the words of the scribes are all weighty*."
"*The words of the elders are weightier than the words of the prophets*."

So this is actually and really and truthfully what it amounted to, even the commandments of God being superseded by the commandments of men.

And such has always been the history of man in regard to God's Word: man's idea versus God's ideas. It is most subtle when man's ideas are presented in the guise of, and supposedly in conformity to, Religion, which is a binding together again to God.

What a tragedy to try to bind in an unauthorized way! Certainly man can be brought to God only in the way He has prescribed, only by keeping HIS commandments, not man's.

"Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and, whosoever curseth father or mother, let him die the death:
"But ye say, if a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free" (Mark 7:9-11).

"Corban" originally meant a sacrifice of gift to God." But in the days of Jesus, it merely meant to take a vow, not necessarily a vow to God. This vow, then, was expressed concerning many things.

"*Corban to me is wine for such a time*."
—meaning that he took a vow to abstain from wine. Or a man would say to a friend—

"*Corban to me for such a time is whatsoever I might be profited by thee*."
—meaning that for such a time he vowed that he would receive neither hospitality nor any other benefit from his friend.

We can see how such a Corban vow could easily be applied to relieve one of the responsibility of providing for his needy parents, if they so desired. Such a vow contradicted the commandment of God given through Moses. The Jews placed the man-made Corban vow above the Law of God; upon which Jesus says—
"Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."

And such a vow may have been made in the time of anger and hate, speaking evil of one's parents, and yet he who made the vow would be free or excused from giving any benefit to his parents.

Not only so, but it seems, having once taken such a vow, one was not permitted to change his mind on rightly seeing that the Law of God is pre-eminent in all things as THE ruling guide of life and

that consequently no precept of men could contravene it. No, once the Corban vow was taken, the Pharisees and scribes did not permit the man to violate the vow—

> "And ye 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 ye have delivered; and many such like things do ye."

Such commandments, traditions and precepts of men, violate the Word of God and are, therefore, vain worship—to no avail in the sight of God. Such is only concerned with outward ritual, lip service, pleasing to men in giving a fine external show of religion and worship. So Jesus calls the people unto him and tells them—

> "Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand:
> "There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him . . ."

—as eating with defiled hands out of a common dish, without knives or forks, the hands handling the food which also becomes defiled, entering into the stomach.—

> ". . . but the things which come out of him . . ."

—(out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, etc., vs. 20-23)—

> ". . . those are they which defile a man."

Still speaking to the people, he says,

> "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear."

So Jesus places this serious issue before the people; the tradition of the elders versus the Law of God, his words versus those of the Pharisees and the scribes. If any among than had ears to receive his teaching they would hearken from their mind and heart the judgment of Jesus in this matter, given in Matthew 15:20—

> "These (evil thoughts and works of the flesh) are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man." —N.M.

PRINTED IN U.S.A.