

the little company who were present on that memorable occasion centuries ago, when our Savior as a man celebrated the Passover with his disciples. We trust however, that Judas was not represented.

Although few in number, each one seemed animated by the same Spirit, and I think all felt like saying with Paul,—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." I believe each one present was strengthened by that true Bread from heaven, and that all departed with a stronger determination, if possible, to "run with patience the race which is set before us," and to "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling."

The church here unite in expressing their Christian love to you. We all pray that the Father may strengthen and keep you, enabling you to give to his loved ones the "meat in due season."

With best wishes, I am your brother in Christ,  
E. F. CRIST,—*New York.*

DEAR BROTHER:—Sister Black and I partook of the emblems with Sister Hasson, at her home. We had a blessed season, entering into fellowship, in our thoughts and prayers, with the different groups and single celebrants all over the field. As a result we hope to take up our work with added zeal and courage.

Your brother in the blessed hope,  
W. W. BLACK,—*Massachusetts.*

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL:—Have just concluded Memorial service this evening. Myself and wife only. We have had a profitable hour and have been greatly blessed, as I hope many of the little circles of the household have been this evening.

We purposed going to Clifton to meet the friends there for this occasion, but snow storm and muddy roads rendered it out of the question. Please accept our very kind regards and believe us to be yours in Christ.

F. J. & E. CHAPMAN,—*Kansas*

DEAR BROTHER:—The church at Portsmouth celebrated the Memorial Supper last night. There were present eight brethren and one sister, besides another lady who does not hold with us. Great solemnity and profound joy pervaded every heart. All agreed in saying it was "good to be there."

Yours in him, WM. W. MURRAY,—*Virginia.*

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL:—I write also to tell you of the great blessing which all received in the celebration of the Lord's Memorial Supper last night. We met in a parlor and had the comfort of having with us many who live too far to attend our regular meetings. There were probably twenty-five in all present. All seemed fully consecrated to the Lord, and many were the moistened eyes, as all whom the time would permit gave testimony of their gratitude to the Master for his great gift of himself for us. Our thoughts were especially prepared for the Memorial by a good-sized meeting Sunday morning, when Brother Wyndeltz, in a marvelously clear manner, brought out the subject of the ransom, the Passover; and how it is our blessed privilege to be joint participants in that one loaf. We had you and the Allegheny work in memory to the Lord in prayer that he may graciously guide and preserve you, and continue the blessings you have heretofore bestowed.

All join me in love to you and the dear brethren at Allegheny. Yours in our dear Redeemer,

S. H. HUSTON,—*Texas*

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## FRESH ATTACKS UPON THE BIBLE

"Wounded in the house of its friends," is certainly true of the Bible today; for it has no outside foes one-half so antagonistic, so injurious. But it is not the Bible's friends who thus attack it—but enemies, who under guise of being its friends have received honored positions in the household of faith,—who, from the vantage point of its pulpits and colleges and editorial chairs, insidiously stab the Bible, while professing to love and reverence it.

Three volumes have just issued from the press, each one calculated to undermine, shake and overthrow the faith of many of God's people, who could not be reached or shaken by the same testimony if it reached them from disreputable or infidel sources. The first of these is volume III. of the series being published by the higher critics. The second is by Rev. Lyman Abbott, D. D., successor to Henry Ward Beecher in Plymouth pulpit, but now editor of the *Outlook*. The third is by Judge Charles B. Waite. It is not for us to judge that these essayists are dishonest; nor that they are seeking rewards of fame as leaders of thought, in a direction toward which all but the very few will shortly follow them, "as sheep having no shepherd." Rather, we will suppose these writers to be thoroughly honest—intent upon telling the truth as it appears to them. Indeed, we see in this movement a fulfillment of the Bible's predictions respecting our day, the ending of the present age.

We may not state the matter too strongly when we declare that God is back of the many present-day movements which are ensnaring many and making shipwreck of their faith, in the sense that he designedly does not hinder such erroneous presentations, but, on the contrary, permits circumstances to foster and prosper them. Thus the Lord declares through the Apostle, "God shall send them strong delusions that they may believe a lie: that they all might be damned [condemned, as unworthy a place in the Bride of Christ] who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness;—because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved."—2 Thes. 2:10-12.

The very men who are thus becoming blind leaders of the blind into the ditch of unbelief are men who have had first-class opportunities as respects education and opportunities for Bible study; men who, had they loved the truth and sought it, would have found it clear, convincing, precious; but who, rejecting the Lord's leading, and leaning to their own understandings, have become vain in their imaginations; have cut loose from their faith-anchorage, and are helplessly drifting—they know not whither.

Does some one say,—It is strange that God should prosper

rather than oppose these strong delusions! Yes, and the Lord himself calls it "his strange work," "his strange act," (Isa 28:21) Describing this "strange" prospering of error and unbelief the Lord says:—

"Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lip do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: therefore behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder [miracle]: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid."—Isa. 29:13, 14.

This language was applicable to typical Israel at the first advent, and consequently is applicable to nominal, spiritual Israel in the present "harvest" time of this Gospel age. The above is merely a rehearsal of what the Prophet explains more in detail in the previous chapter. (Isa 28) In verses 9 to 12 the Lord explains the preaching of his message through imperfect human lips, and that this message, rightly received, should have brought rest and refreshment for the weary and heavy laden; yet to the majority its blessed influences were lost, so that as a whole Christendom or churchianity is about to go backward and fall and be broken and snared and taken in the general unbelief that is even now sweeping over the civilized world.—Verse 13.

The secret strength of this delusion, which has made the Word of God of no effect through human tradition, and prepares the way for this great falling away, is mentioned in verses 15 and 18. It is the covenant made by the great teachers with death, and their agreement with hell (*sheol*—the grave, the state of death). Under this agreement or covenant, which all the creeds of Christendom endorse, *death*, which God's Word styles an "enemy," is accepted as a friend; while the *grave*, the Bible teaches us, is the great *prison-house* of mankind, from which in due time the glorified Christ will deliver all of the prisoners who will accept his righteous terms—by restitution processes.—Luke 4:18-21; John 5:28, 29; Acts 3:19-21.

"Hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men [disdaining teachers] that rule this people." You have thought it *wise* to teach the people that death and the tomb are not enemies—that the dead are more alive than ever they were, either in a place of bliss or of torment. You feared to tell the people the truth, that the dead are dead, lest this should decrease your superstitious hold over the minds of the people. You said: The people will prefer to think of their friends going at once to glory, without waiting for the second coming of Christ.

and a resurrection of the dead, and it will heighten our influence over sinners to tell them an untruth—to misrepresent to them the words *sheol* and *hades* and to make them believe that these words represent a flaming torture-chamber, presided over by legions of furious demons, and that at any moment they may by accident be dropped into that eternal torment if they are not members of some of the sectarian systems, which we have organized, but none of which were or will ever be recognized by Jesus or his apostles. You have thus practically in effect said, "We have made lies our refuge and under falsehood have we hid ourselves," and are safe—no matter how great a storm may arise;—even though an overflowing scourge of infidelity come, we are safe in the ignorance of our people, and in their dependence upon our dictum for their faith and hopes of the future: as we have succeeded in "bamboozling" them in the past, we shall continue to do in the future.—Isa. 28:15.

But the Lord's answer is No! This very error shall work your ruin, and the overthrow of your system, and all identified therewith shall suffer loss. (Vs. 18; 1 Cor. 3:15) I have laid the only sure foundation, Christ Jesus, and he that trusteth him, and he alone, shall not fall, but "be able to stand" in the great time of testing, near at hand. For "judgment also will I lay to the line and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail [hard, cutting truth] shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters [truth] shall overflow the hiding place," and force you to show your subterfuges. (Verse 17) The falsehood respecting death and the death-condition will fall with all that you so carefully built with this hay, wood and stubble of falsehood. The fire of that day shall test it and destroy it; and when it goes down you will go down with it, and will no longer have influence and preferment with the people.—Verse 18.

This falsehood has been at the bottom of the various errors which have confused you; and because you had wilfulness of heart and drew near me with lip-service, rather than a full consecration of heart, ye deluded and blinded yourselves (as teachers) as well as those whom you "rule," so that to all of you my Word has become as a sealed book—understood and appreciated neither by the learned nor by the unlearned. (Isa. 29:10-12) Hence the fall of both leaders and followers into the ditch of unbelief—infidelity. This calamity will pursue you continually until you come to "understand the report [doctrine, truth]."—Isa. 28:19.

Why so? Because the creed-beds you have made for yourselves are too short for men to rest upon. They would serve the purposes of infants in thought and reason; but as knowledge, growth, comes, the bed is found too short, too uncomfortable. The covering, too, is insufficient for the developed mind, though sufficient for the infantile. No thinking person can wrap himself securely in the narrow hopes of any "orthodox" creed: if he gets under the covers of the Calvinistic creed-bed and endeavors to consider himself one of the elect, as therein taught, he is harrassed by the chilling air of doubt, and cries:—

"'Tis a point I long to know,  
Am I his or am I not."

If he removes to the trundle-bed creed of Arminianism, and seeks to cover himself with the hope that there is no election—that the door is open and that "whosoever will" surely includes himself, he cannot get warm because the chilly doubt comes to him again with the suggestion that the Scriptures certainly do mention a "little flock" and an "elect" class and a "narrow way." And he reasons that if God deliberately planned and prepared an eternity of torture for the vast majority of his creatures, he must be a loveless if not a conscienceless being—on whose mercy no reliance is to be placed. The larger he grows mentally the more uncomfortable the short beds and narrow creeds, until he resolves to get out of them in disgust. The difficulty is that it is not merely respecting human creeds that he loses faith; but believing that they represent God's Word, the thinker becomes a general skeptic, and viewing the Bible from the outside only, and in the light of the traditions of the elders, he is deaf to every influence and appeal for the truth during the present age, and until in the new dispensation the voice of the Son of man shall declare the truth with no uncertainty—when all the deaf and dead shall hear and, obeying, may have "life more abundant."

The theory, that the dead are not dead, is the basis for the false doctrines of hell and purgatory, and these monstrous absurdities are the rocks upon which the entire system of Babylon is being wrecked; and only those who learn *in time* that these are unscriptural, and who learn the true Gospel as illustrated in the divine plan of the ages, will be able to stand

the shock of skepticism, higher criticism, evolution theory, etc., now sweeping down upon churchianity.

Rev. Heber Newton, D. D., of New York City, a leading man in "Orthodoxy," more courageous than some of his associates, boldly states his agreement with death and *sheol*, over his own signature, as follows:—

"Death is the true resurrection. No other resurrection is conceivable.

"He who dies awakens into consciousness the same being as of old.

"The threads of the old existence are not cut at the touch of death.

"Death ushers us into no foreign world. All that is essential to human life here will be found there."

#### REVIEWS OF THE BOOKS MENTIONED

The fact that the first named is gotten out by the higher critics, tells in a word of its antagonism to the Bible as a *divine* revelation, and it will probably circulate chiefly among theologians already well saturated with doubts, and too conservative to circulate such books among their people to arouse doubts and questions they could never hope to answer. But the other two books are of a different caste—intended for the people, and likely to be well advertised, and "pushed" upon public attention by their publishers, and will work havoc among those resting their faith upon sects and creeds. We must notice these, to guard our readers against them. Remember, however, that we do not expect to be able to help any to "stand" except "the very elect," and them not so much by outward as by inward evidences of the Bible's divine authorship. Remember that it is our understanding, as outlined in these pages for the past twenty-two years, that Babylon's sudden fall, as a great millstone, is to result from such influences.

Dr. Abbott's work is styled, *The Life and Literature of the Ancient Hebrews*; and we have come across what we consider an excellent and very moderate review of it in *The North American*, from which we make extracts, which we believe will interest our readers, as follows:—

#### BOOK SHOULD HAVE GREAT INFLUENCE

"Coming at this particular point of human mental history, when so many of us are religiously unsettled, unwilling either to accept materialism, or to believe what never can be proved, the book may be expected to exercise no little influence upon our decision. . . . If Dr. Abbott's book be the last and authoritative word of the Higher Criticism, then its opponents at least know where they stand, and where issue should be joined.

"The present reviewer is bound to mention his profound dissent from the position which Dr. Abbott has taken. If what the reverend essayist pronounces to be the final truth about religion be so indeed, then it seems to me that religion is not worth attending to. We have practically not advanced beyond the religious state of the ancient Egyptians, or of classic paganism. Religion is morality softened a little by an illogical suspension of judgment regarding some so-called religious mysteries. Dr. Abbott does not state his opinion in these words; but after examining his argument I cannot see what else to make of it. He does not believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God; he does not believe that Christ is God made flesh.

#### NO SUBLIME PASSION IN IT

"What he does believe on these points is common-sensible, plausible and ingeniously argued; but it is poignantly disappointing to those who look for the glow of supersensual faith; there is in it no lift, no sky, no sublime passion. I do not see how such a creed can hold and combine men; how it can do anything but loose and disperse them. It makes no demand upon us, except to be amiable and keep the commandments. It makes the straight and narrow path only too smooth and facile. It engenders no misgivings as to the competence of human intellect to solve all important religious problems. It ventures to call Herbert Spencer's Unknown Energy at the background of phenomena by the name of Deity; but it supplies us with no adequate reason for loving him, or for a conviction that he, in any comprehensible, vital way, loves us. It denies that he has ever vouchsafed us any first-hand, incontestable revelation of himself.

"According to Dr. Abbott, he (God) always permits himself to be colored, modified, and arranged, as it were, according to the limitations and bias of his human prophets; and we have nothing for it but their own personal persuasion that they were not woefully deceived in their assumed function. In short, the Bible is a remarkable and superior kind of literature; and God is an august and lovely possibility. Christ is, or was, a man in whom the divine Spirit was powerfully and perhaps uniquely manifested. But nothing has really happened in religious history which could not be paralleled in

kind, if not in degree, with what happens in the experience of any one of us. And yet Dr. Abbott states everything so softly and sweetly that we hardly feel, at the time we read him, that he is depriving us of religious essentials. It is only when we think him over afterwards that we perceive that we have nothing but husks to eat, and that the immortal springs have run dry.

#### HERE IS THE KEYNOTE OF IT

"The keynote of his attitude is in a chance sentence in the preface: 'What will the New Criticism do with the Bible?' Why shall we not rather ask, What will the Bible do with the New Criticism? As a matter of fact, it turns out that the New Criticism does not and cannot touch the Bible, in its divine essence, at all. It is occupied entirely with a minute and learned examination of the outside or shell of the Bible—with its letter, as we say. It makes certain discoveries, or arrives at certain theories, with regard to this letter; and then proceeds to judge of the Word of God upon the basis of these external discoveries and deductions.

"The conclusion reached is that the Bible is not divinely—that is, directly—inspired; is not the authentic and eternal Word of God; and, since no other book claims to be that, it follows that there is no such thing extant as a full divine revelation. Now, obviously, God can never be found out by man, working with his finite human faculties; if he do not reveal himself, he will never be revealed, and must always remain a mere surmise or plausible deduction from facts which man is capable of discerning. There is nothing—absolutely nothing—divinely authoritative upon which we can take our stand.

#### AUTHORSHIP OF THE BIBLE DISCUSSED

"The Bible is nothing more than an adventitious collocation of writings, composed by Hebrews of salient intellectual, moral and emotional gifts, who lived some thousands of years ago. We are to take it for what it seems to us to be worth, and for nothing more. It is full of errors, chronological, geographical, scientific; it is full of fairy tales, lyrics, imaginative stuff of all kinds, which, however, possess the common peculiarity that they do contain constant references to the Hebrew Jehovah. If there do not live among us today poets, story-writers and 'prophets' just as remarkable as these old Hebrew ones, that is only because it happens so; and on the other hand, our historians and scientific writers are far more trustworthy.

"As regards the prophets, we are to understand that they were not prophets in the sense that they foretold things to come; if Isaiah or somebody else used a form of words which might be regarded as a foretelling of the coming of Christ, that is a mere coincidence, nothing of the kind was in the prophet's thoughts. Upon the whole, were a number of devout, pure-minded, highly gifted men to get together today, they might turn out a very respectable Bible of their own, entitled to just as much respect as this ancient volume or library, which has been so painfully handed down to us from antiquity.

"I say, they might; no doubt, on the other hand, they might not; but at any rate, there is no apparent reason in the nature of things why they should not.

#### WONDERS AT DR. ABBOTT'S CONCLUSIONS

"Now, I do not suppose there are many to question that the Bible has all the imperfections that Dr. Abbott finds in it. But many must be at a loss to discover why, admitting the imperfections, and conceding that the Bible is nothing else at most than an attempt to show that God is reckoned with in human history, Dr. Abbott should regard the Bible as in any sense a divine book.

"If the Bible be not something infinitely deeper and more vital to mankind than this, it is practically nothing; and that it should have survived all these years, and have so powerfully influenced mankind, is extraordinary, to say the best of it. It leaves us destitute of any certain knowledge of God, and entirely free to deny that any Supreme Being exists.

"In truth, unless we are prepared to make assumptions, at the outset, far outstripping any possible conclusions or discoveries of human knowledge or science, we cannot hope to have any God or Bible whatever. If we are to credit a divine Providence at all, we must credit it without any reservations whatever.

"If I could prove my belief in God by any process of logical demonstration, I should cease to believe in him. It is a certainty miraculously implanted in the soul, or it is nothing.

"I believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. I do so in virtue of reading the Bible, and being convinced by a spiritual and mystical process that it is the divine revelation. I then perceive that the trivial and often revolting historical

details of a depraved and infidel people which it recounts; the songs which it sings, the apostrophes which it records, the allegories, the stories which it narrates, have not, in their literal significance, any divine or external meaning whatever.

"But all these are a mask, cover or body, under or within which is a soul or spirit, answering part to part to its material envelope or instrument, and conveying the spiritual truths concerning the Creator and the human being which he has created, which are essential to that creature's integrity and salvation.

"Though its compilation seems to have been governed by chance, it was not so, but it was divinely ordained from the beginning. And whether or not the writers thought they were inspired, every word which they set down had already existed in the divine mind, and their hands were divinely guided so to write it and not otherwise.

"The true alternatives between which we must make our choice are the view stated by Dr. Abbott, which gives up religion; and this, which demands the surrender of the judgment of the human senses. His book may precipitate this choice, and thus do a good beyond what he had himself foreseen."

#### JUDGE WAITE'S CRITICISM OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

This book is ably reviewed by the *New York Tribune*, from which we give the following extracts:

"Of the numerous gospels in use in the church in the second century, the author says that only three were probably apostolic, namely, the Gospel of St. Paul, the Gospel or Recollections of Peter, and the Oracles or Sayings of Christ, attributed to Matthew. These, as well as numerous other sacred writings now unknown, were reserved as sacred scriptures in the early church, until they were suppressed in the interest of the present four gospels. 'I found myself,' says Theodore (A. D. 430), 'upward of two hundred such books held in honor among your churches, and, collecting them all together, I had them put aside and instead introduced the Gospels of the four Evangelists.' Many of the early Fathers refer plainly to these suppressed writings, and some of these references indicate that writings now unknown to the church were regarded as authoritative. The three writings mentioned above probably did not teach the miraculous conception of Jesus or his physical resurrection. But it is the contention of the author that these and other beliefs gradually grew into shape in the church, and that then the present Gospels were written, many of the materials in the older writings being used, the Gospel of Paul was thus the germ of the Gospel of Luke; the Gospel of Peter of the Gospel of Mark, and the Oracles of the Gospel of Matthew.

"Holding thus as to their origin, the author naturally rejects the Gospels as unhistorical. Undoubtedly, he says, there was a moral and religious teacher that came to be known as Christ. This teacher, who had devoted followers and disciples, was put to death in the reign of Tiberius, and after his death Paul, the chief of his disciples, founded a new religion on his doctrines and precepts and on the belief in his resurrection. Both Peter and Paul, in the opinion of the author, were responsible for much of the cruelty, bigotry and fanaticism which came later to characterize Christianity. The apostolic fathers emphasized most the supernatural elements in Christianity, and in a credulous age new supernatural additions could easily be made without exciting any protest."

#### THE FOUNDATION OF GOD STANDETH SURE

Replying to the Judge's arguments, we notice first, that their weight depends greatly upon the attitude of the mind receiving them. If we will imagine a mind (and they are legion) already disgusted with the din of the jarring and contradictory creeds of Christendom's sects, numbering more than a hundred; and if, additionally, we will imagine that mind awakened, in part at least, to a realization of the injustice, unmercifulness, lovelessness, pitilessness, heartlessness, of the doctrine of eternal torment of all except a "little flock" of "saved" ones; and if we will remember that this awakened and disgusted mind has from infancy been taught that the Bible is the foundation for that slander upon the divine Creator, then we can easily see that to such a mind the weight of Judge Waite's book would be immense. Such an one is prepared and waiting for an excuse for utterly repudiating the Bible, and getting rid once and forever of harassing fears respecting the future of himself and millions of others, which as a nightmare had haunted his soul since infancy.

To the mind thus prepared and fertilized with the rich compost of the errors of centuries, including the "dark ages,"

every argument of this book will doubtless bring conviction and seem utterly unanswerable. The seeds of doubt, once sprouted, will make reverence give place to contempt, and every item that is obscure is classed as an inconsistency and contradiction, and speedily faith's anchorage is wholly lost. And in the case of the majority there is no real faith, but merely credulity, which vanishes still more rapidly.

But on the other hand, note the position of those who approach these questions and suggestions of doubt from the opposite standpoint:—like those mentioned by the Prophet, saying, "The people that do *know* their God shall be strong and succeed." Suppose this one to have "tasted that the Lord is gracious," in realizing the forgiveness of his sins, and that being thus justified he has made a full consecration of himself to the Lord—even unto death; and that thus he was begotten of the holy Spirit and realized the new life begun in his heart, and making progress in all the fruits of the Spirit;—one in whom old things had passed away and all things become new.

Suppose, additionally, that this one was living today, and consequently privileged to partake of the "meat in due season" provided for those of the household of faith who are Israelites indeed, and in a proper attitude of heart to receive it. Suppose that he had been a faithful student in the school of Christ and learned of him, being "taught of God." Suppose that now he saw clearly the divine plan of the ages,—the fall of our first parents, the promises through the patriarchs and the prophets of a great Redeemer out of Israel, who dying, should thus redeem or purchase all men, not from torment, but from death, and who, since his resurrection, has waited with the work of restitution (resurrection) for the world until, as appointed by the Father, he shall have first selected his "elect" church his bride and joint-heir in the kingdom, which is to bless and restore all the willing of the purchased race.

Suppose this one, who has *seen* with the eyes of his understanding the wisdom, justice, love and power of God portrayed in God's Word in respect to the divine plan, as it shall ultimately shine forth as the sun,—would it be easy to convince such an one that he had followed cunningly devised fables? Nay, verily, he would say with one of old, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him."—2 Tim 1:12.

Ask such an one what he thinks of the fact that the New Testament was not handed down from heaven in book form, but grew, as one after another added his testimony, and he would answer, Why, yes! How else could it come to us and yet have us "walk by faith and not by sight"? Inquire what he thinks of the fact cited above, that Theodoret declared that in the churches of one province he found over a hundred different manuscripts, by various authors, dealing with the events of our Lord's ministry, and that he, Theodoret persuaded them to accept as authoritative the four Gospels we now use,—relegating the remainder to less prominence, as unauthoritative. Ask if this would shake his faith in the narratives of the four Gospels, accepted now as well as then?

His answer would be, No, this does not shake my faith. I know very well that none of the Gospels were written until after Pentecost, and that later on there were numerous presentations of the matter by more and less competent writers. I know that of the four accounts so long canonically recognized by the Lord's people two (Mark and Luke) make no claim to having been written by apostles. I can well surmise that all accounts in that day of scarcity of books would be costly, as to time of preparation, and on this account, as well because of their sacred theme, all such would be kept in more or less honor, by the Lord's people. I can readily see the wisdom of deciding which of these versions were the more accurate in detail and desirable in style of diction: and I agree that a council of believers would be a desirable way of reaching a conclusion on this subject that would be beneficial to all. And I fully endorse the selection made, and conclude that in this, as in all of his people's affairs our Lord supervised. Furthermore I am the more convinced of the honesty of the records, as well as of those who decided upon them, by the fact that two of them do not claim to have been made by eye-witnesses, nor by apostolic writing, but were by St. Paul's contemporaries and assistants, and one of those says most modestly:—

"Forasmuch as *many* have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us [primitive Christians], even as they [apostles, etc.] delivered them unto us—[they] who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of these

things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus."—Luke 1:1-3.

Could there be anything less like deception than this? Would it not have been easy for dishonest men to have omitted the introductory words of Luke's Gospel, and to have given it the name of James, or Paul, or Andrew, or Peter, or Nathaniel? And could they not have done similarly with the Gospel by Mark? Moreover, it is evident from the above words of Theodoret, as well as from other records, that the general recognition of the four Gospels we now recognize took place long before Theodoret's writings. He mentions the matter in a manner that implies that the province thus instructed and advised was an exception to the rule—different from the churches of other provinces. And this, and the evidences against the rejected ("apocryphal") books, and the evidences in favor of the four Gospels we still recognize were so weighty with the churches that Theodoret evidently had no difficulty in convincing them of the propriety of the course he advised.

No secret has been made of the fact that certain records respecting that time were rejected, and some Bibles, especially old Family Bibles, contained numerous of those rejected books, separated from the accepted ones, and styled as a whole The Apocrypha. And we have no hesitation in saying that the difference between these rejected records and those accepted and kept are so great that not one of our readers would be unable to quickly detect the wide differences between the style and general presentations of these and the simple, grand, unostentatious presentations of our four Gospels.

But, some one may ask, If these Gospels were not *selected* in the apostles' days, but long afterward, how do we know that they were inspired? We answer, that in the apostles' days most of the evangelizing was done by word of mouth, few people knew how to read, even if they had books; and the Lord evidently did not intend to fix matters so that there should be no room for doubts and doubters, and no room for exercise of faith in his supervision of his own cause. He undoubtedly did supervise the matter, so that we have in the four Gospels a very full record of the facts. Nor are we to think that inspiration is requisite to the telling of the truth, and these Gospels make no claim to having been inspired or needing inspiration;—they are histories. We read Macaulay's history of England and believe its records without thinking of asking whether Macaulay was inspired to write it. We trust it even though we have no reason to assume that God supervised its statements, as we have good reason to expect he did with the Gospel records.

As for the Epistles, their case is different,—they are not merely historical records; they are doctrinal treatises; respecting the authority, the inspiration, of their writers we have good reason to inquire. And whoever will examine the rejected or Apocryphal epistles will find that they are wholly inferior to those retained, and in addition, that no apostolic epistle was rejected and no unapostolic epistle retained. The conclusion of the early church was the same that ours now would be. (1) That Paul was the Apostle chosen of God to fill Judas' place (the uninspired and undirected action of the eleven in choosing Matthias, previous to Pentecost, being entirely ignored by the Lord). (2) That all of the apostles were specially selected and specially inspired and directed of the Lord for the work given them to do; and that they have no successors in office and authority;—even though Papacy has since claimed, to the contrary, the same inspiration and authority for its popes. The last book of the Bible sets its seal to the thought that the twelve were special representatives of God, and that the number could not be added to,—by showing the glorified church of the future, under the symbol of a city—whose *twelve* foundations had in them written the names of the *twelve* apostles of the Lamb.

It is objected further, that some of the books now recognized as parts of the New Testament were regarded with suspicion by some of the churches for quite a while, and openly rejected by some for a season:—among others the second Epistle of Peter, and Revelation. We answer, that this is not surprising; and so far from being an unfavorable item it is favorable;—showing clearly that whatever indifference might have been manifest in some congregations at first, some were very critical, very exacting as to the proofs of genuineness of what they received. And as for the Book of Revelation, it belonged less to that day, anyway. It is specially ours of today, and contains abundant internal evidence of its oneness with the remainder of God's Book.

However, as at first stated, all these things, while clear as crystal to those possessed of and taught by God's Spirit, are obscure to all others who will find abundant opportunity for "stumbling at the Word, being *disobedient*." It is still as true

as when our Master said it, that—"If any man will do my Father's will, he shall *know* of my doctrine." Whoever will not *do* this, whatever else that is good he may do, will not know,—not being of the kind "to whom it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom." (Matt. 13:11) To all others the matter may be foggy, at best; even as the Prophet declared, "None of the wicked [unfaithful to their covenant] shall understand." The Scriptures are for and addressed to the church—the saints and the household of faith; and their evidences are internal, not external; just as the symbolic vessels and furniture, etc., of the Tabernacle and of the Temple were completely hidden from outsiders, and could be fully seen only by the typical priesthood, in the light of the typical oil and lamp.

Does some one ask, What can we do for friends whom we may expect more and more to see drifting off into skepticism? Must we let them go without endeavoring to help them?

We answer, No; we should do all we can for each one, even though we know that it will avail nothing for the vast majority. Give them the following treatment, asking divine wisdom to know how to approach them wisely. (1) Let them read this paper, and (2) loan them *MILLENNIAL DAWN*, VOL. I., the first four chapters of which were specially written for the assistance of truth-seekers, who need first of all to have faith established in the Bible as a *whole*. If they are in the proper condition of heart, that is to say, if they have the "hearing ear," they will get a start at least in that volume, which perhaps has converted more infidels than any other book in print today. If they love the truth and appreciate the divine character as set forth in the *Plan of the Ages*, they will want to go on and on in the green pastures of truth, and by the still waters they will be refreshed, and doubtless the great Shepherd will by his rod and staff guide them to the kingdom. But the record is that a thousand to one shall fall.—Psa. 91:7

#### WHENCE THE PRESENT GENERAL BLINDNESS?

Prevalent blindness and loss of faith in the Bible are attributable to the various so-called Orthodox creeds of Christendom; formed during the "dark ages," these are full of superstitions and falsehoods, and vain attempts to reconcile these with the holy Scriptures. Now that reason is awakened it does not occur to the devoted sectarian that the fault is wholly with his creed, and that it really is in violent conflict with God's Word as reverently and reasonably interpreted. On the contrary, he loses faith in his Bible in proportion as he loses faith in his creed; because he considers them to be in harmony—identical in their teachings.

He has a reverence for his Bible as an antique, as a remembrancer of the past,—intimately associated with his earliest experience at a pious parent's knee; and he has a similar reverence for the creed and denomination to which his parents and himself have long been attached. But he has lost *faith* in both. He can see at a glance the inconsistency of the teachings of the various creeds, that God is either *incapable* of extending the knowledge of Christ to all mankind, and giving all a fair opportunity for believing and obeying the Gospel, or else that he is *unwilling* to do so to any but an *elect few*; and that the vast remainder are to be tormented to all eternity;—which, if God knew the end from the beginning, implies that he provided them with eternal life with the foreknowledge and intention that they should thus suffer.

Men could stifle reason in this manner once, but they can do so no longer. It is to their credit as reasoners, and to their credit as men and women of heart and sympathy, that they reject such theories as impossible of belief, and declare that such testimony bears on its face the evidence that it is untrue; that it is a blasphemy against the true God and a dishonor to the conscience and reasoning powers of every one who so professes; and that they had rather trust to a theory of their own construction, built on love and reason, than stultify themselves longer by such professions.

And not seeing that their creeds malign the Bible as much as they do the Creator, they reverently lay aside Bible and catechism as relics of their thought-infancy. Nominally they still adhere to their denomination as being "as good as any, and as correct as any;" and the denomination still adheres, nominally, to the creed and the Bible and the accustomed forms and ceremonies: believing them to have a salutary effect upon the young and a restraining influence upon the immorally inclined.

However it may be kept secret, the "broad-minded" and "intelligent," "up-to-date" ministers and members of the various denominations have taken, or are rapidly taking, the view advanced by Dr. Abbott, set forth foregoing: that *morality*, and not *faith* in Christ, is the divine test. The tendency of

many is to universalism, but the majority, having lost faith in the Bible, have no guide whatever except their own or other men's reasons, and are full of doubts. They have lost their anchor and are being driven to shipwreck on the rocks of infidelity by the increasing winds of reason.

These all need help; but there are none who can render aid except such as by the grace of God have gotten their own eyes open to see that the Bible has been unintentionally traduced in the house of its friends—that it is loyal to God, and most beautifully grand and self-consistent to the sanctified reason, and able to stand the test today and to come off victor, as much as in the past; while, on the contrary, the sectarian creeds can find no defenders among reasonable men.

The bolder infidels tell us that the Bible was made up by priests and knaves. We inquire, which priests and knaves?—of which denomination?

Was it made by Methodist priests and knaves?

If so, why did they not add a dozen or so more texts to support their special tenet—that divine grace is free during this Gospel age? And why did they not omit those texts which mention "election" and the "elect"?

Was it the Presbyterians who made the Bible?

If so, why did they not add more texts on election, and omit the three or four which appear to be contrary to the doctrine of election, and which they cannot explain away?

Was it Lutheran priests, Episcopal priests, or Baptists? No! for similar reasons.

Oh! Finally they conclude that it must have been made by the priests and knaves of the church of Rome! Well, let us see whether its internal evidences favor that view. What object did they serve by such a fraud?

If the Roman Catholics made the New Testament, and pretended that they gave the words of Jesus and the apostles, so as to furnish a foundation for their teachings, how comes it that they are and have long been the bitter foes of the Bible—Bible readings, Bible Societies, etc.? And how comes it that they did not make a Bible which would support their theories? Why did they not put into it clear statements to the effect that Peter was the first pope; that our Lord's mother was the "Mother of God," and that she should be prayed to; that saints are to be prayed to; that images, crucifixes and pictures are to be adored? Why did they omit mention of "holy water," "holy candles," "extreme unction," consecrated cemeteries, and the invalidity of any but priestly marriages? Why did they not insert commands respecting the wearing of "scalpels," the necessity of masses for the dead, to get them out of purgatory? Why did they not insert instructions to all to apply to the priests for indulgences, and fix liberal prices at which they should be supplied? Why was Purgatory left unmentioned when it is the mainstay of their church treasury? Why did they not throw in at least a dozen or so texts amongst the epistles of Paul, Peter, James and John describing hell and purgatory in vivid colors, instead of omitting a single mention of either? Why did they not insert a dozen texts or so on the doctrine of Trinity, instead of leaving the entire Bible without such a text, until the seventh century, when *one* text was corrupted, so as to indirectly imply something of the kind? (1 John 5:7—admitted by all trinitarians to be corrupted, and omitted from the Revised Version). Why did they not insert a passage to show that the "*clergy*" are separate and distinct from the "*laity*"?

Why, on the contrary, did they insert passages which say that there is no such class distinction as "*clergy*" or "*laity*" in God's church, but that—"Ye are all one in Christ Jesus"? Why did they permit that their favorite, the Apostle Peter, should be made to contradict their theory and practice, by saying, not of the "*clergy*," but of the whole church, "Ye are a royal priesthood"? (1 Pet. 2:9) Why did they permit the oft repeated statements that the *end* of the wicked would be "destruction"—"second death," etc., which would be wholly contradictory to their theory of "*eternal torment*"?

We answer, that the evidence is conclusive that the Bible was not made by any of the sects, and is in antagonism to them all, and that in justice it should be judged by itself—by its own internal evidences. And all who have seen its beauty from this standpoint, praise God for the light—for his wonderful plan of the ages, of which the ransom at Calvary, *once for all*, is the center, the election of the Gospel church a grand incidental, and the blessings of the Millennial age, bringing opportunities for obedience unto eternal life to all the redeemed is the grand outcome.

Whoever knows this Gospel and does not desire and endeavor to spread it to others about him who are blind to it, but hungry for it, surely lacks the spirit of Christ, whatever may be his profession. How dwelleth the love of God in him!



# "HE ASCENDED UP ON HIGH"

ACTS 1:1-11.—MAY 19.

"While he blessed them he was parted from them and carried up into heaven."—Luke 24:51.

Luke, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles, in its introduction refers to his Gospel narrative of the life of Jesus—respecting "all that Jesus began both to do and to teach until the day in which he was taken up." It was no doubt of divine intention that he should express this matter in this particular form, and refer to the personal work of Jesus as merely the beginning of his work. Only those who grasp this thought; viz., that the body, or the church, "the body of Christ," in the flesh, is a continuation of the work of Jesus, the Head of that body, in the flesh—only such can grasp with clearness the divine plan. We are to consider the name, Jesus, as the personal name of our Lord and Head, and the name Christ, or Anointed, as the official name, applicable to him as the head, and to the whole church as his body. From this statement the two advents of Christ are brought close together, for the work of the first advent, the sacrifice of Christ in the flesh, will be little more than completed, until the work of the second advent begins, the blessing of all the families of the earth with restitution privileges and mercies, at the hands of the glorified Christ, Head and body. Indeed the *preparation* for the new age and its work laps upon this Gospel age and its work.

It was in harmony with this thought (that the work which he had begun, his apostles and all his footstep-followers, were to carry on) that the Master so particularly instructed them during the forty days after his resurrection. We have already noticed that he appeared to them in all some six or eight times, and now in the present lesson we have an account of his seventh (or ninth) appearance, at the end of the forty days. It was probably at least a week after he had seen seven brethren in Galilee that he appeared to them again at Jerusalem, where he evidently had appointed the apostles to assemble. Here he met with them and gave them his final parting instructions, which were perfectly in harmony with his previous teachings, that their mission was to continue to be a spiritual one, to feed his sheep and to feed his lambs—to continue the work which he had begun, and to follow in his footsteps. But he impresses upon their minds the fact that they are incompetent for this work until first they shall have received of the Father through him a special power from on high, for which he bade them wait at Jerusalem. He reminded them that this blessing for which they were to wait was the same that he already had mentioned before his crucifixion,—telling them that the Father would send the holy spirit in his name, that it would bring to their remembrance all things that he had spoken unto them, and guide them into all truth, etc.—John 14:16, 26; 15:26.

He would impress his disciples with the importance of the blessing for which they were to wait, and with the fact that it meant to them a new era, a new dispensation: as they knew of the reformation movement instituted by John the Baptizer, and that the repentant sinners were immersed in water, he would have them know that now he was instituting a church on a much higher plane, and that all who would be received into it would be immersed in holy Spirit,\* holy power—come under an influence of power from on high. His declaration that this would be not many days hence, was indefinite purposely; first, that they should expect it soon, and not be disheartened or discouraged, and yet he left the exact number of days unstated, so that they might be continually watching for it. This left the apostles in a waiting attitude, and, as Luke informs us, in an attitude of prayer and expectancy, very profitable to them at this juncture.

Slowly, during the forty days, the disciples were learning to expect very different things from what they had in mind at the beginning and throughout the Lord's ministry: they were learning that the kingdom glories and honors were not to be distributed immediately; but that a new dispensation, and a new kind of work in harmony with it, was set before them to be done; and gradually their minds reverted to the prophecies in which the blessings of the Lord upon the nation of Israel are set forth, and the intimation given that the blessings upon the whole world are to flow through the children of Abraham in some national capacity. They had confidence in these prophecies, and now they would ask the Lord respecting them. How could these prophecies be fulfilled under the new arrangement, which seemed to ignore the nation and to merely use themselves, the Lord's followers, a mere fragment of the nation. Hence their inquiry of the Master whether now or soon or when the prophecies would be fulfilled, which promised

the restoration of Israel to divine favor as God's kingdom, thus implying its release from the power of Rome and all other dominions.

Our Lord's answer was not to the effect that they had misunderstood these prophecies, and that they would all have some kind of spiritual fulfilment; on the contrary, by his answer he implied that their conception of the prophecies was quite proper, but that the time for their fulfilment had not yet come, and that they must not press the question as to the times and seasons; they must trust to God, who has these in his own keeping, and who will abundantly fulfil every promise he had ever made in its due time.

Our Lord, then, drew the minds of his disciples back to their own work, to which he had called them—to the work which they were to accomplish as members of his body in the flesh. He informs them that they shall be specially empowered through the holy Spirit, which the Father would send in his name; and that using this power, this influence, they would be privileged to be his witnesses—his representatives—representatives of his character, his teachings and his work, not only in Jerusalem and throughout Judea and Samaria, but also eventually to the utmost parts of the earth. He would have them see that a great work was being committed to their care. God would attend to all of his promises in due time; now they, to be his co-laborers and witnesses, must be attentive to the work to which they had consecrated themselves, and for which they now were to be thoroughly empowered and quickened through the holy Spirit. With this parting lesson, while he was walking with them and talking to them on the Mount of Olives, going in the direction of Bethany, he began gradually to ascend from them, a cloud receiving him out of their sight.

One error leads to another: and the failure to note that our Lord's change of nature from human to spiritual took place in his resurrection, and that his presence during the forty days was that of a spirit being, unseen except when he for a few times very briefly appeared to his disciples for the purpose of instructing them, and these different appearances in different forms, in different kind of clothing, etc.—has led some to very peculiar ideas respecting our Lord's ascension. Thus we find one doctor of divinity saying on the subject: "The ascension was a noble and fitting close of the earthly career of Jesus; far better than to die again, as Lazarus did, or to remain always on earth in his body—the only alternatives!" Poor man! How tightly error has blindfolded the eyes of his understanding, that he should think thus.

From the Scriptural standpoint, that our Lord was raised "a quickening spirit," invisible to mankind, and that he merely "appeared" in forms of flesh, the matter has an entirely different aspect. From this standpoint we see that this last appearance of our Lord to the disciples, like the other appearances, was intended for their instruction, and to help natural men, not yet begotten of the holy Spirit, to understand deep things, which otherwise they could not so well have comprehended. Our Lord's ascension was simply another way of *disappearing*. When he appeared to them in the upper room, the door being shut, and talked to them and convinced them, having finished his lesson he "*vanished*" as suddenly as he had "*appeared*." The body of flesh and its clothing, which, by miraculous power, he had organized within the room, he could and did disorganize again by a power beyond our comprehension—the same power which turned the water at Cana into wine; by the same power by which angels had frequently appeared as men for a purpose,—disappearing when the purpose had been accomplished. Indeed, in one of these instances narrated in the Scriptures, an angel accomplished his disappearance in very much the same manner in which our Lord disappeared on this last occasion of his ascension.—Judges 13:19-21.

The propriety of *thus* terminating his intercourse with the disciples is evident: they would have no further expectation of his appearing to them again as a man, in different forms, after such a farewell: they would understand that he was gone from them now as a spirit being, as he had previously said: "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come." The confusion of the D. D. from whom we quote foregoing, is the more manifest from the fact that in further writing upon this subject he recognized the "two men" of vs. 10 as being angels who, for the time being, had assumed human form for the purpose of communicating with the disciples, and impressing upon them a certain valuable lesson. Why could not the gentleman see that our Lord, having finished the work which the Father had given him to do (*viz.*, the laying down of his life as the man Christ Jesus) was no longer a little lower than the angels, a fleshly being,

\* "Ghost" is old English for "spirit"—the word is really obsolete, and had the American Revision Committee had its way it would never have appeared in the Revised Version, we are told. It is not used in the American Committee's Version, it is misleading.

but was now "changed," and as he was, previous to coming into the world, a spirit being of the highest order, so now, as the Apostle declares in his resurrection, he was a life-giving spirit? (1 Cor. 15:45) And if the angels had power to appear as men, and did so appear, why should not their chief and Lord have power so to appear to his disciples in various forms, for the purpose of convincing them that he was no longer dead, but risen,—no longer a man, but "changed"?

Our Lord's words, "It is expedient for you that I go away," lead us to inquire, Why was his ascension expedient? Let us consider the matter. Had he remained with the disciples, present but invisible, and appearing to them and to all of his followers occasionally throughout this Gospel age, of what special advantage would it have been? What could he do for us in this manner that could not as well be done for us from his high station in the heavens with the Father? And again, had he remained with the church it would have seemed all the more inexplicable that he should have permitted his representatives to be misused, slandered, abused in various ways, and that he should seem to take no part in the management of the affairs of the world, while claiming the legal right through purchase, by his own blood, to be its prince and Savior from the power of sin and Satan. For all these reasons it was appropriate that he should not be with us, but that we should know that he was with the Father, and should wait for him until the time appointed of the Father—until all of his faithful disciples had been called and proven acceptable, and the foreordained number of the elect fulfilled;—and that he should then come to receive them to himself, and to establish them as his joint-heirs in the kingdom; and to assume the rulership of the world, to bind the Adversary, to overthrow his dominion, and to establish truth and righteousness on a permanent basis by the divine authority and power which he possesses.

But there was another and all-important reason why he should ascend to the Father, and it is that which our Lord mentions, "Except I go away the Comforter will not come." (John 16:7) Why not? We answer, that the whole world being under divine condemnation, none could be recognized by the Father and adopted into his family, begotten of the holy Spirit as his sons, so long as they were sinners. And the death of our Lord Jesus, while it was the ransom-price, had not as yet affected any of those for whom it was intended. Before it could benefit them he must ascend to the Father and must present that sacrifice or price as on behalf of those to whom it would be applicable: that they, being justified by faith and sanctification or setting apart to holiness and divine service, even unto death, might receive the Spirit of adoption into the family of God's spiritual sons.

This was the reason, and it is in full harmony with the Apostle John's statement: "The holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified." (John 7:39) He had received his glorious body in the resurrection, as the Apostle shows us in 1 Cor. 15:43, 44; but it remained for him to be glorified (honored) after he would appear in the presence of the Father and present before him his complete work, and officially receive divine approval; then he was honored, glorified, with a name that is above every name, "that at the name of

Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess, to the glory of God the Father."—Phil. 2:10.

We can imagine the eleven apostles (all Galileans) standing looking after the disappearing Master, and endeavoring to peer into the cloud that had received him from their sight, and endeavoring to comprehend the meaning of the various lessons of experience through which they had recently passed; and their perplexed thoughts respecting the promised coming of Christ again, and the interim of loneliness which he had promised should be compensated for by the promised holy Spirit which should comfort them. Then appropriately, at the needed moment, under the divine providence, two beings stood by them, "men" in appearance, but in garments which indicated that they had only assumed the form of men for the occasion, and which told the apostles that these were really angels. These in cheerful tone and impressive manner assured them that they need not continue to look into the sky, but to remember that he would so come again in like manner as they had seen him go.

How strange that so many of the Lord's people, even amongst those who fully believe in, and with deep interest long for his second coming, should overlook the particular features of this angelic testimony! First, that it was the *same* Jesus that should come again—not the former Jesus, whom they knew in the flesh, but the same Jesus, who was taken up from them, and whom they recognized as so thoroughly "changed" from the time of his resurrection—the spirit Jesus, "a quickening spirit." This is the one promised to come again, not in weakness, as "in the days of his *flesh*," but a spirit being, clothed with full plenitude of divine power to establish them as his kingdom, and through them to bless all the families of the earth.

How strange, too, that the other important fact which the angel noted, *viz.*, the "*manner*," is so often overlooked by the same class! What was the manner of our Lord's going? Was it with great ostentation, with the sound of a literal trumpet calling the attention of the whole world? Was it in a manner known to the whole world? Or was the *manner* of his going an extremely quiet one, known only to his most faithful followers? His second coming is to be "*in like manner*!" Those who give to the words of the angels their true weight and force, laying the emphasis upon the right words, will receive a blessing in so doing, and be the better prepared to understand the character of our Lord's *parousia*. They will be less surprised to know that it fulfils all these conditions; that he is now seen only with the eye of faith, and only by the most consecrated of his people. It will be after his second coming, that he (unknown to the world) will reckon with his own servants, his saints, exalting the worthy, faithful over a few things, to be rulers over many things. (Matt. 25:14-30) It will be still later on that he will restore the kingdom again to Israel—to the worthy ones of that people, through whom, as the earthly agents of the spiritual kingdom, the blessing of divine grace and truth shall flow to all the families of the earth. And in connection with the giving of the kingdom to the elect the great time of trouble will reveal the new ruler to all the families of the earth in the fiery judgments upon all iniquity, until every eye (of understanding) shall see him—revealed as King of kings and Lord of lords.

## PENTECOST—THE DAY OF JUBILEE

ACTS 2:1-11.—MAY 26.

"When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth."—John 16:13.

Pentecost signifies fiftieth, and was used amongst the Jews as the name of one of their most important feasts or religious celebrations. As their fiftieth "Jubilee" year followed a cycle of seven times seven years, so Pentecost, as a jubilee day, followed a cycle of seven times seven days, from the time of the gathering of the sheaf of first-fruits, which was presented before the Lord as a "wave-offering." This sheaf of the first-fruits evidently typified our Lord in his resurrection on the sixteenth of Nisan—he having been slain as the Passover Lamb on the fourteenth of Nisan.—Lev. 23:5, 6, 15, 16.

In our last lesson we noted the fact that it was the eleven apostles that were witnesses of our Lord's ascension, "men of Galilee;" and it was these, who were to be his special representatives, and through whose word others were to believe, that he instructed to tarry at Jerusalem until endued with power from on high. The present lesson shows us the same eleven apostles in the upper room complying with our Lord's injunction, waiting in an attitude of prayer and expectancy, and in readiness to begin their mission of feeding his sheep and lambs. In harmony with this view is the statement, a

little later on, when the preaching began, that "all these are Galileans." And again, "Peter standing up with the eleven" (Acts 2:7, 14) We are not positively informed that any others were present at this time, but from previous statements, to the effect that others (to a total of one hundred and twenty) met with the apostles, "continuing with one accord in prayer and supplication," we may reasonably infer that they were present at the time of the Pentecostal outpouring of the holy Spirit, and that the whole company was thus baptized, immersed in the holy Spirit, which filled the place where they were assembled. There is no good reason, however, for questioning respecting the cloven tongues of fire—that these sat upon any but the apostles. The statement is that "It sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." The subsequent statement is that all those who spoke, all to whom the spirit gave utterance or tongues, were Galileans; but whether or not the apostles were thus specially recognized at this time, we are assured, not only from our Lord's words, but also from his subsequent revelation, that

the apostles occupied a special place in connection with his kingdom, his church, assigned to no others.—John 6:70; Rev. 21:14.

The Pentecostal blessing signified divine acceptance of the sin-offering which, finished at Calvary, our Lord at this time had presented before the Father. The outpouring of the holy Spirit upon the consecrated believers constituted their begetting of the Spirit to the new nature, and implied thus, that the condemnation upon them as the children of Adam and under the Law Covenant was cancelled, and that now they were accepted in the Beloved, counted as children of God, and if children then heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord, if so be that they would suffer with him, that they might also be glorified together—Rom. 8:16, 17.

As is implied in our Lord's statement and in his promise, this was a new thing. No such outpouring of the divine Spirit had ever occurred before as respected the children of Adam. Indeed no such acceptance and new begetting on God's part was possible until first the sin-offering had been made and accepted. The only thing corresponding to it was the descent of the holy Spirit upon our Lord at the time of his consecration at baptism in Jordan. He there received the holy Spirit of adoption in the same sense, but "without measure," he being perfect; those who received this holy Spirit at Pentecost received it by measure, that is, in limited degree. (John 3:34) Although they were all "filled" with the Spirit, yet, because of weakness and imperfections of their organisms, they could only receive limited measures,—these differing one from the other according to natural temperaments, etc.

God's holy spirit had indeed been manifested in various ways previously, but all of them differed from this manifestation. For instance, it was the holy power of God which moved upon the waters in connection with the world's creation. (Gen. 1:2) Again, as the Apostle Peter declares, "Holy men of old spake and wrote as they were moved by the holy Spirit"—mechanically. (2 Pet. 1:21) He further explains that what they spake and wrote they did not comprehend; because their utterances and writings were not for themselves, but for us of the Gospel age. We are, therefore, to recognize the fact that the spirit dispensation had its beginning in Jesus, when he was thirty years of age; but so far as others were concerned its beginning was in the sanctified ones at Pentecost, as recorded in this lesson. Neither are we to think that these Pentecostal outpourings and baptisms require a repetition, for the holy Spirit thus once poured upon the church was to abide to continue, with the church, not to be withdrawn and poured out afresh repeatedly. Some have concluded that there were times when the holy Spirit was not in the world at all; but this was because they were looking for it in a wrong direction or under wrong conditions. At times the nominal church of outward professors has been so overgrown with the "tare" element that the true "wheat" could not so readily be discerned, yet we are confident that the Lord never left himself without a witness, and that even in the darkest hour of the dark ages there were some of God's true people in the world: some representatives of the body of Christ; some, therefore, possessing the holy Spirit: some who therefore constituted the salt of the earth and the lights of the world, even though the darkness was great around them and its influence so powerful that no record of the true church is to be found, but only the records of the apostasy.

The holy Spirit, in harmony with our Lord's promise, was sent only to the consecrated class, and was to *abide* in the true church class, "the body of Christ;" and we, and all others who since have come into fellowship and union with our Lord, "the Head of the body which is his church," have thus come into and under the influence of the holy Spirit, our rightful portion and privilege. By this Spirit we were begotten to the spiritual nature, and became heirs of all the exceeding great and precious promises which belong to "the body of Christ."

It was appropriate that the giving of the holy Spirit should be with certain outward demonstration and manifestation: not merely to impress and convince the apostles and the early church, but also for the benefit of those who should subsequently come into relationship with the church. Faith must have a ground to rest upon: an assurance that there was at the beginning such a direct recognition of the Savior's sacrifice and of the divine acceptance of the consecrated ones who trusted in him. The rushing wind fitly represented this holy Spirit; indeed the words "spirit" and "wind" are both from the same Greek word; a wind is the best illustration of God's Spirit, because it is powerful, and yet it is invisible. The cloven or split tongues "like as of fire" or *light*, was also fit symbols by which to teach the church something respecting the divine power that had come upon her.

As a tongue it represented the influence which God would use during this Gospel age as the agency of his spirit in accomplishing the work he now designs to do; for "it pleased God by the foolishness of *preaching* to save them that believe." (1 Cor. 1:21) This way of preaching is not a foolish way, since it is God's way; but it is so different a way of effecting a work from what the natural man would have chosen that it seems to *him* to be an unwise way. True, at the beginning of this age the tongues, the preaching, was supplemented by miraculous "gifts" among the Lord's people, but these were not designed to be permanent, as the Apostle explains (1 Cor. 18:8); and after the apostles who alone had the power to confer these gifts had died, the gifts themselves of necessity gradually vanished; since which time the preaching tongue has been practically the only instrument which the Lord has used in connection with his great work of calling out and sanctifying the peculiar people to be the bride, the royal priesthood, the body of Christ.

Some have incorrectly identified the fire-likeness of these tongues with the prophecy of John the Baptist, respecting Christ, saying, "He shall baptize you with holy spirit and with fire." (Matt. 3:11, 12) John's words were not addressed to the disciples, but to the promiscuous company of his hearers, some of whom were Israelites indeed, and some, as he declared, a generation of vipers. The Pentecostal blessing was indeed the fulfilment of a part of John's prediction; *viz.*, the baptism of the holy Spirit (Acts 1:5); but this was not the fulfilment of the latter part of John's prophecy respecting the baptism of fire. The room wherein the disciples were assembled was not filled with fire, and they were not immersed in it, either literally or figuratively. The cloven tongues which appeared upon their heads were not fire, but light, a fitting symbol of the holy Spirit, and the message of light and truth and blessing which the apostles were proclaiming. The baptism of fire, which John predicted, came later, not upon the faithful Israel, but upon the class whom John designated, a "generation of vipers"—upon the class of whom the Apostle Paul says, "Wrath is come upon this people to the uttermost." The trouble, the *destructive* trouble, the fiery trouble, in which that whole nation was figuratively engulfed and baptized, and which ended in A. D. 70, after witnessing the destruction of millions of lives, millions of property, and the complete overthrow of Israel's national polity, was the worthy fulfilment of John's prediction of a baptism of fire.

The fact that the holy Spirit upon the apostles was accompanied by miraculous manifestations or gifts, tongues, etc., does not imply any greater favor of God toward the primitive church, which had those gifts, than toward the Lord's people of a later day, after those gifts had ceased; for, as the Apostle points out, it was possible for some to have those gifts without having much of the real spirit of the Lord. He says, "Thou I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, *I am become as sounding brass* or a tinkling cymbal. 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. 13:1, 2) We are, therefore, to esteem love for the Lord and for the brethren and for the neighbor—active love, which does as well as wishes and says—to be the best evidence of an acceptable condition with the Lord, the best evidence of a filling with *his holy Spirit*—a far better evidence than the possession of the "gifts" described. Far greater, far more precious gifts of the Spirit, then, are the gifts which the Spirit develops in us—the fruits of the Spirit—joy, peace, faith, love, etc.

The news respecting the miraculous manifestation of divine power spread rapidly through the city of Jerusalem, which, in addition to its general population, had at this season of the year visitors from all the neighboring countries, speaking various languages and dialects. And this furnished the opportunity for the Lord's humble disciples, "unlearned men," to begin their great work for which now they were fully commissioned and empowered. Quite possibly by this gift of tongues the Lord made up to his disciples the lack of larger education and fitted them for the work; at all events, not only on this occasion do we find that they were able to discourse in all the various languages, but subsequently, when traveling in various quarters, we have no mention of any difficulty encountered in respect to the languages or dialects, though these were many amongst the different classes and nationalities.

The concourse of the people at Jerusalem attending this feast was of a religious kind—the most religious Jews from all the surrounding countries and nations (where more Jews resided than in Palestine), gathered on such occasions to do homage to the Lord, to render thanks and to pray for the