

twinkling of an eye, shall soon obtain that blessing, and that then the great time of trouble will fully burst upon the world, and speedily bring down the high, the lofty, and the proud, and prepare the world for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Here we have consistency, at least, and harmony of Scriptures which have never been harmonized in the past, and which cannot now be harmonized from any other standpoint or with any other interpretation. Here we have the spiritual kingdom of Messiah, with all power, displacing the spiritual kingdom of Satan, and establishing order and righteousness through earthly agents of its own, and overthrowing the earthly agents of the prince of darkness, many of whom are his servants merely because "the god of this world [age] has blinded the minds of them that believe not."

"THEY WITHOUT US SHALL NOT BE MADE PERFECT"
HEB. 11:40

We remark, incidentally, that following the gathering of the Church to glory, as above outlined, will come the resurrection of the holy ones of the past,—"Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the holy prophets," whose resurrection will be to *perfect earthly conditions*, and who shall be the "princes in all the earth," seen of men, and representatives of the invisible but all-powerful spiritual kingdom—the glorified Christ. Thus, chosen representatives of fleshly Israel will indeed rule the world, and bless it, as the representatives and agencies of the Spiritual Israel, and the nation of Israel will be first to respond to the standard of the Lord thus set up.—Psa. 45:16; Rom. 11:25-31; Zech. 12:10.

Our Lord's *parousia* (presence in the world) begun in 1874, will continue till the end of the Millennial age. The word is not applicable merely to a little period of presence at the beginning of the Millennial age; Christ's *parousia* and that of his church will continue throughout the age. Nor will the *epiphania* and *apokalupsis* be a sudden burst of glorious light; nor do these words signify a visible showing to mankind of the Lord's person, or of the persons of his church. Let us remember his words, "Yet a little while, and *the world seeth me no more*." Let us remember also that, as his church is to be in *his likeness*, so his likeness is declared to be an "express image of the *Father's person*;" it is written that he is the King eternal, immortal, *invisible*. (1 Tim. 1:17) Nor will it be any more necessary that the world should see with their natural eyes the Lord and his glorified ones, than that they should see the Heavenly Father: the world will see the earthly representatives of God and of Christ and of the church, when they "*see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the holy prophets*," for they will be samples of perfect manhood, which is the *earthly image* of the invisible God.

Our Lord's *epiphania* (bright shining) and his *apokalupsis* (unveiling) began shortly after his *parousia* began; the bright shining of his presence is now visible to those who are walking "in the light"—to those who "are not in darkness with the world." It is a mental illumination, an illumination to the eyes of our understanding, and not to our natural eyes. The eyes of our understanding have been opened to see him that is invisible to the natural sight. The *epiphania* of our

Lord is already affecting the world also, tho not through the eyes of the understanding; for they have no eyes for such spiritual things: nevertheless, the bright shining of the Lord's presence is influencing and affecting the whole course of the world, through an increase of knowledge on every subject—specially noticeable since 1878. Eventually, all the blinded shall have opened eyes of understanding, and

"EVERY EYE SHALL SEE HIM"

Many even who are not of the watchers are noting the signs of our times and are startled, and led to exclaim, What do these things mean?—this remarkable latter-day advance in science, art and mechanical invention?—this latter-day discontent in the midst of plenty and luxury?—this latter-day growth of millionaires and paupers?—this growth of giant corporations of world-wide power and influence?—Why are national policies and public men and their utterances and doings criticized (judged) by the masses as never before?—And what means it that with an apparent growth in wealth and numbers in all denominations of Christians, there is a growing dissatisfaction, discontent in them all: a growing tendency to criticize the creeds and the preaching of everything?—How comes it that nine-tenths of the preachers in all denominations know that their hearers desire a change, and would gladly "move on," if they knew how to better themselves even at smaller salaries?

The Scriptural answer is, The hour of God's judgment is come; the time when "Christendom," political, financial, social and ecclesiastical is being judged—being tried in the divine balances. And the Scriptures declare that she will be found wanting, and will be adjudged unworthy to further administer the affairs of earth, which will be turned over to the elect "little flock," according to the divine promise.—Luke 12:32.

The secret of the matter now is the same as in the Jewish "harvest," which John explained, saying,

"THERE STANDETH ONE AMONG YOU WHOM YOU KNOW NOT"—JOHN 1:26

"Mine eyes can see the glory of the presence of the Lord;

He is trampling out the winepress where the grapes of wrath are stored;

I see the flaming tempest of his swift descending sword:

Our King is marching on.

"I can see his coming judgments, as they circle all the earth, The signs and groanings promised, to precede a second birth; I read his righteous sentence, in the crumbling thrones of earth:

Our King is marching on.

"The 'Gentile Times' are closing, for their kings have had their day;

And with them sin and sorrow will forever pass away;

For the tribe of Judah's Lion now comes to hold the sway:

Our King is marching on."

* * *
"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice [knock], and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me."—Rev 3:20.

VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER

A PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER'S LONGINGS

Rev. Henry Van Dyke, one of the prominent ministers of the Presbyterian denomination, has felt constrained to give utterance to his conception of the needs of his church for a better and clearer statement of its present belief. We clip the below quotations:—

"There is a twofold need for revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith. In the first place, the church has been studying her supreme standard, the Bible, for two hundred and fifty years since the Confession was written. She has been educated by Christ for one hundred years in the great work of missions. It is reasonable to suppose that she has learned something. Why should she not express it in her creed?

"Another reason for revision arises out of the fact that the Westminster Confession was made in a time of fierce conflict and controversy. It was natural that certain things should be stated then with greater emphasis than they would have otherwise received; that the metaphysics of the seventeenth century should creep into certain chapters; and that certain points should represent a judgment of that age rather than a permanent truth. For example, the Westminster Confession speaks of the Pope of Rome as the Antichrist. Presbyterians today do not generally believe this. Again, by expressly men-

tioning 'elect infants' the Westminster Confession leaves open the supposition that there may be 'non-elect infants.' Presbyterians today believe that all who die in infancy are saved by Jesus Christ. The Westminster Confession has a long metaphysical chapter on God's eternal decree, which at least *seems* to teach that some men are created to be saved and others created to be damned. The Presbyterian Church today does not believe this, and to guard against misapprehension on the subject it wishes to say clearly and unmistakably that God has not put any barrier between any human soul and salvation.

"Moreover, the Westminster Confession has no chapter on the love of God for all men, on the Holy Spirit, on the Gospel, or on missions. Now the Presbyterian Church has come to believe in these things with all its heart; and it wishes to put its belief into words.

"Therefore revision is needed, not because of a conflict in the church, nor because of a lack of liberty, but because faith, deepening and broadening through the study of God's Word, craves an utterance in the language of living men.

* * * *

"Finally, this revision movement should give us a stronger emphasis on the truth that God is love.

"Sovereignty and grace have always been the two great pil-

lars of the Reformed faith. Sovereignty means that God is supreme. Grace means that God alone can save.

"Take these two words separately, emphasize the sovereignty, limit the grace, and you have a hard creed. But take them together, believe in the sovereignty of grace and the grace of sovereignty and you have a creed that is infinitely sweet and glorious.

"No man can be saved without God. There is no man whom God is not willing to save.

"That is the whole of it. That is the creed which is incarnate in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. That is the creed which our faith longs to utter."

We rejoice that this gentleman, and others of the Presbyterian connection, realize the situation *thus*, if not more intensely. We hope they may soon secure all the relief they so earnestly and so properly crave. At the same time we cannot avoid a few reflective questions:—

(1) Have these learned men, who have been posing for years as ambassadors for God, only now awakened to thought upon so important a subject?—only now begun to feel uncomfortable in respect to their creed? Their answer would probably generally be,—No; we have long been troubled,—long felt our bondage.

(2) Why, brethren, did you not end your difficulties long ago by asserting your moral and religious stamina, and withdrawing from the denomination whose creed, you admit, has not been the creed of your heart for many years,—possibly was not such even when you subscribed to it and took your present ministerial vows to uphold and teach it? Was it because you supposed that creed inspired? Was it because you believed that our Lord and the twelve Apostles established the Presbyterian system?—Surely not; surely as educated men you made no such mistake, but knew that it was instituted nearly fifteen centuries after the death of the founders of the Lord's one true church.—What can have held you, fettered you, in thought and word and act so long and so thoroughly? The answer should doubtless be;—No good opportunity presented itself, until now. We could not think of withdrawing from the system on so slight an account as that of a defilement of our consciences and a misrepresentation of the divine character and plan. We, therefore, bore the burden without much inconvenience until now popular thought favors a change;—yes, we might almost say demands it. No, we hope to carry the denomination for a creedal restatement.

(3) Another query, friends:—Since you knew that the Presbyterian system was no more the church which our Lord and his Apostles founded than others of the sects,—Methodists, Roman Catholic, Lutherans, Episcopalians, etc., etc., and since that idea did not hold you all these years, and still, —was it not the honor, the salary, the good name, the social

standing you had in Presbyterianism that fettered you? And, if so, instead of praising and lauding your present belated movement, which you hope will bring you some "honor of men," should we not rather pity you and sympathize with you, not to say despise you, for your supineness?—for having failed to break your creedal fetters long ago? Should we not fear for you that for years you have been willing to sell God's character and your own consciences for earthly considerations? Indeed, since you now admit that your present action is because you believe it the more popular, can we give you any credit at all, or see cause to believe you one whit more honest or noble than you were in previous years? Their answer to this would doubtless be,—We all stand or fall together, and we do not believe that the world or the nominal churches take a higher plane of thought or action than we have taken. And their estimate is probably a correct one; alas, that Christian conscience in general is not on a higher plane!

THE ABSURDITIES OF THE HIGHER CRITICS

Dr. Eaton, editor of *The Western Recorder* takes firm ground against the absurdities of the methods and logic of the so-called higher critics of our time. As illustrating their fallacies he furnishes the following incidents:—

"At the Baptist Congress in Detroit (1894) Dr. Howard Osgood—the greatest Hebrew scholar in America—in the presence of men who were well informed on the subject and who were quite favorable to the alleged 'results of the higher criticism,' stated what those 'results' are, as told by their advocates. He asked to be corrected if in any particular he erred; but no correction was offered. From slips of paper he read statements of these 'results,' and when all present had assented to the correctness of the presentation, Dr. Osgood startled them by saying that all his quotations were from Thomas Morgan, a Deist of the early part of the eighteenth century, and from Tom Paine, the well-known infidel of the latter part of that century."

"Not long ago two leading ministers in the North united in writing an account of a great religious gathering, and they sent their combined article to a number of higher critics,' requesting that they separate it into the two documents, giving to each of the two authors his portion. Their failures were most egregious, and no two of them agreed, because they worked independently. And yet these men, utterly unable to resolve an article, avowedly written by two men, in plain English, and written in their own time and country, into its original documents; these men are cock-sure they can correctly divide a book, written in Hebrew thousands of years ago, with no evidence of composite authorship, so as to give each supposed author his exact portion! And they claim to do this so accurately that they divide a single sentence among three authors, with perfect confidence!"

GOD FIRST—HIS APPOINTMENTS

"Giving thanks unto the Father . . . who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son . . . He is the Head of the body the church: who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preëminence."—Col. 1:12-18.

Scarcely could we hope to find a more suitable motto for the Lord's people during the present year, than, the words, "God First." A thorough devotion to him, a full recognition of all his appointments, acknowledges our Lord Jesus: as our text declares, he has the preëminence,—he is Lord of all. This motto was adopted by the Allegheny church for the present year: assuredly all who shall endeavor to live up to this motto to the best of their ability will enjoy much of divine favor, and make considerable progress in the narrow way.

The text suggests the thought that the divine government is an autocratic one—the reverse of a democratic government, "of the people, by the people, for the people." As we look over the governments of civilized nations, we find that the more autocratic the government the less intelligent the people who will support it. For instance, the Russian government is autocratic; the authority, the power, being very largely held by the Czar, without responsibility to a parliament or Congress representing the people. As an example of a liberal monarchy, Great Britain is perhaps best, for there the powers of the sovereign are quite limited; the aristocracy being represented in the House of Lords, and the populace in the House of Commons; these two representative bodies share with the monarch the responsibilities of the government. The government of the United States, in which all the citizens are ostensibly on an equality, and in which the Citizen President, as their choice, is the chief executive, is recognized as the highest type of civic government, most favorable to the masses—a republic, a democracy.

It may at first seem strange to some that the type of earthly government least favorable, least esteemed by the in-

telligent,—the autocratic form, should most nearly represent the form of government which the Almighty has instituted for the entire realm of creation. If an autocratic form of government has proven itself so unfavorable to human liberty and progress amongst men now, can it be possible that this form of government is the very best for the universe in general, and forever? If so, wherein lies the difference? By what process of reasoning shall we demonstrate that that which experimentally amongst men has proven itself to be bad, should ultimately prove itself to be best? We answer that the difference is because all men are fallen and imperfect; hence are under the dominion of sin and selfishness to a greater or less degree; and additionally, all are imperfect in knowledge and in judgment, even if their hearts were fully disposed for righteousness. On the contrary, the Almighty is perfect in his attributes, and in his knowledge; and the law of his being as well as the law of his empire is—the reverse of selfishness—the law of Love. It is indeed dangerous to be fully under the power of any fallen imperfect being, however well intentioned; but it is a most desirable thing to be under the guidance and control of a perfect being, possessed of all knowledge, wisdom, justice, love, power. This is the situation: Jehovah, our God, is a dictator, his laws are perfect, just and good, and all of his creatures subject to those laws are blessed. Under these conditions, the autocratic, theocratic government which now obtains in heaven, is the most desirable one of all; hence as our Lord suggests, we pray that this same government may ere long come to earth; saying,—*"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven."*

Altho Jehovah God, our Creator, is not elected to his posi-

tion, and does not hold it through the consent of his creatures; yet all of his creatures who are in harmony with the principles of righteousness delight to hold him as their King and Lord,—their Dictator, whose every wish it is their pleasure to obey. As a Dictator he has appointed Christ Jesus to be "Head of the body, the church." But although we are not asked to vote, as to whether or not Christ shall be the head of the church, God, nevertheless, respects our free moral agency, to the extent that we are not compelled to accept his arrangement in this matter. But, if we object, it means that we are not of the body, the church; for the Almighty proceeds with his own plans, and those who do not fall in with those plans merely fail to that extent to secure to themselves the proffered blessings.

Similarly the Almighty did not inquire of the angels whether or not they would accept the glorified Jesus as their Lord; he autocratically elevated our Lord Jesus, because of his implicit obedience even unto death, even the death of the cross, as the Apostle declares, "Wherefore [on account of his obedience unto death] God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which 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." Similarly, our context declares, that in his prehuman condition our Lord Jesus was from the beginning the head, the chief of all his Father's creatures, works, arrangements. "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible, and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." (Col. 1:16, 17) This agrees also with the statement of John's Gospel (1:1), "In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos with the God, and the Logos was a God: the same was in the beginning with the God. All things were made by him; and without him was not one thing made that was made."

It appears from this, that the Heavenly Father has exercised his autocratic government from the beginning; choosing his first-born Son to be his representative in the entire work of creation. It appears further that it was to this first-born Son that the privilege or opportunity of becoming man's Redeemer was first proffered—as a privilege; because the Almighty autocratically intended that this matter of man's redemption should not only display his justice and love, his wisdom and his power, in respect to mankind, but it should additionally be a test, a manifestation, of the loyalty of his First-begotten; and that such loyalty, being fully demonstrated, would properly become the occasion for the still further advancement of his First-begotten One,—to the divine nature, "glory, honor, immortality,"—demonstrating his worthiness in all things to be *preeminent*.

It is not, of course, the Apostle's thought that the Father made the Lord Jesus preeminent above himself, Jehovah. We are continually to remember the Apostle's suggestion of 1 Cor. 15:27, where, after declaring that the Father hath put all things under the Son, he adds, "It is *manifest* [need not be stated] that he [Jehovah] is excepted, which did put all things under him [Jesus]." So, gathering the proper thought of our text, we are still to remember that God is first: and that our Lord Jesus is first to us, as the Head of the church, because God has given him this preeminence. In recognizing Jesus' full authority and headship of the church, we are honoring him who appointed him, and thus we keep God first: as our Lord declares, "All men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." (John 5:23) They are not to confound the two, but are to worship and reverence and obey both the Father and the Son: for the latter seeks not, and does not his own will, but the will of the Father who sent him, and who exalted him to his position of preeminence over all his creatures. The Apostle explains this relationship fully and emphatically when he declares that,—The head of the women is the man: and the head of the man is Christ; and the head of Christ is God—Jehovah.—1 Cor. 11:3.

While rejoicing in liberal governments amongst men, and esteeming popular governments the most desirable under present conditions, we nevertheless, recognize that this is so merely because conditions are evil ones; because selfishness is the reigning law amongst men: the selfish interests and instincts of the masses may be trusted as safer for the whole population than the selfish instincts of one individual or one class. Consequently, while rejoicing in the government of this land, and in the favor which comes to us under this government, we are still praying for the glorious kingdom which God has promised, in which his will alone shall be the law, and his representative, the King over all the earth.

In the church the divine law or theocracy is already to some extent established. We do not refer to the human insti-

tutions called churches, but to the church "whose names are written in heaven," and whose leadership and membership as a body are directed by the Lord Jesus, their appointed Head. As for religious systems amongst men, we believe that on account of the weaknesses of the race and the fact that even the best are more or less contaminated by selfish impulses, the despotic forms of church government are most evil, and the democratic forms of church government proportionately the less evil, after the same manner as in civil governments. And here we note the Lord's arrangement for his church to be a combination of the two forms of government. (1) It is democratic, inasmuch as the choice of the leaders, is to be determined by the judgment of the *members*. (2) It is theocratic in the sense that the members are not to exercise their own preferences in respect to their choice (votes), but are to use their best intelligence in ascertaining *the will of the Lord*, their Head, in the matter; and hence are to express by their votes so far as they are able, not their own wills, but the will of the Lord. Here is the most harmonious and simple and beneficent arrangement imaginable under present conditions. Each individual, or unit of the church, member in the "body" of Christ, is to say within his own heart, "God first," and God's appointment of Christ as a Bishop or Shepherd of his flock makes him and his will preeminent in our thoughts, in our hearts, in our words, in our deeds. We must, so far as we can discern his will, follow the same; so far as we can understand his Word, we are to speak his Word; and in our choice of leaders his will and not our own is to control. Thus in the church, in the "body," in all of its associated interests and affairs, God first and Christ, his representative, preeminent, is to be the order,—in proportion as each member grows in grace and in the knowledge of the divine will. Thus God, through his faithful, still sets in the church the various members, according as it pleases him. (1 Cor. 12:18) But this applies to each little group of the Lord's people, and to the whole church in general, only in proportion as they conform to his will and Word,—making God first and Christ, the Head, preeminent.

This same principle is to be carried beyond the church into the homes of the Lord's people. There, also, God is to be first and his representative, Christ, to be preeminent. If the head of the family be a member of the body of Christ, and recognizes him to be his Head, he must recognize his laws in the family as well as in the church. And recognizing his law he must oppose every thing approximating anarchy—lawlessness; he must hold up before the family as well as before himself, Jehovah the autocratic governor and law-giver; and Christ Jesus his autocratic representative; and the perfect law of love, which he sets forth, to be the law of all those who are members of his body;—to rule in their hearts perfectly, and in their mortal flesh as far as lieth in them,—to the extent of their ability. The reign of law in every family should be enforced both by precept and example: but it must never be forgotten that it is the law of love—prompted by love, executed in love, accompanied by every kind and helpful influence possible.

This will mean that so far as possible each member of the church recognizing Christ as his Head, will seek to do the will of God in his family; and this will mean that if he has not already established the Family Altar of prayer, he will immediately do so,—to the extent that this is possible. If on account of work or business it is impossible to have family devotions daily, he can probably have them weekly, and we presume that the Lord will accept the good intentions and best endeavors thus evidenced. If the man, the divinely appointed head of the family, is not a member of the body of Christ, the wife, though a Christian, is to recognize the divine law upon this subject, that the man is the head of the woman and of the family, and she is not to establish *family* worship in any manner in conflict with the expressed will of her husband. She should seek the Lord's blessing and guidance and over-ruling providences, that her husband may be agreeable to the arrangement, and should await the results. The husband who is not a Christian but is, nevertheless, morally and religiously disposed, will under these conditions feel all the more the responsibilities of his position; and the wise and moderate and noble conduct of the wife will have the greater weight with him because of her moderation in this matter, and the evidence he has that she is subject to a higher law and lawgiver, to whom he also should be subject.

Putting God first, and Christ preeminent as his representative, should have an influence also upon our business dealings in which we come in contact with the world: so that in our buying or selling, or whatsoever we do, we should remember continually to seek to do those things pleasing in the sight of the one whom we desire to please, and who is *preeminent* in our hearts. This will mean a decrease of selfishness and an

increase of love, and a decrease of meanness and an increase of nobility of character toward all; and the result will be as our Master suggested, saying, "Let your light so shine before men that they seeing your good works shall glorify your Father which is in heaven."

But while this matter of putting God first, and recognizing his appointments, laws and will in all of life's affairs, will exercise the foregoing influences in matters of the church, matters of the home and family and matters of business and contact with the world, yet the chief influence of all will surely be found in our own hearts and lives. The thought of the will of Christ preeminent, connecting with all the doings of life in public and in private,—the thought that we wish God to have the first place in our affections, and his blessing in respect to our influence, our joys, our pleasures, our hopes, our aims,—what a blessing this will bring!—what godliness, what growth in the fruits and graces of the spirit! Very quickly this preeminence of Christ will expand beyond the *actions* of life and attach itself to our words. The true Christian will seek not only to act gently, as he believes the Lord would be pleased to have him act, but additionally, he will seek to speak gently, kindly, moderately, modestly,—and thus to show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. No better homage and worship can we offer to the Lord, and no greater honor can we do to his name amongst men, than by exemplifying his teachings in the words and acts of our lives.

But now we come to the most important point of all; for behind all our doings and teachings, in public and in private, are our thoughts. It is of paramount importance that in seeking to have God first in life's affairs, we shall see to it that he is first in our thoughts;—that Jesus there has the preeminence which God intends he should have;—that our affections should be preeminently set upon him more than upon husband, wife, or children; more than upon houses or lands; more than upon honors of men. Christ is to be enthroned in our hearts preeminent over all things,—yea, preeminent over

self, and with many this submission of self is the most difficult proposition. This is exactly what our Lord taught, saying,—“If any man come to me, and hate not [love not less] his father, and mother, and wife and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, his own life, [being] also he cannot be my disciple.”—Luke 14:26.

Recurring to the illustration of our text—that of the human body, of which Christ is the head and all we are members: let us notice how intimate is the connection between the head and the members in a healthy, properly constituted body. Each member is in direct communication with the head by means of the nerves (however rapidly it is effected); in case of trouble, accident, pain,—the matter is at once reported to the head, and immediately a member of the body, perhaps a hand, is prompt to give service. The head has full direction because the spirit of the head pervades all the members of the body; so that,—“If one member suffer, all suffer with it,” and every member, in proportion as it is in harmony with the head and its spirit of love for the members, will be prompt to act. Sometimes in our human bodies the hand may stretch forth assistance to the injured member so quickly that it seems impossible to conceive that the message first went to the head, and that our hand was subsequently directed by the head to assist; and so it is with the members of the body of Christ; those who are in full touch and sympathy with the Head, the Lord, are to so large an extent of “*one spirit*” with him, so anxious to do his will, and so well informed in respect to what his will is, that they sometimes seem to act almost automatically, in respect to rendering help by word, or deed, or otherwise to those with whom they are in contact.

Let us, dear brethren and sisters, during the year dating from the Memorial Supper, have for the watchword of our hearts, “God First”—and Christ “preeminent” by divine appointment;—remembering that it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh, and the general conduct of life proceeds. “Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life.”—Prov. 4:23.

VISITING, WITH PETER, THE PRIMITIVE SAINTS

ACTS 9:31-43.—APRIL 13.

“Jesus Christ maketh thee whole.”

The persecution which scattered the disciples from Jerusalem throughout all Judea, and of which Paul was one of the leaders, subsided shortly after his conversion; and was followed by a period of rest, recuperation, edification, etc., as mentioned in the first verse of our lesson. Paul's conversion may have had something to do with this, but in all probability a trouble which arose about this time between the Jews and their Roman rulers had more to do with it.

About the year A. D. 38 the Emperor, Caligula Caesar, who had but recently come into his office, promulgated an order that his statue should be set up in various quarters of the empire, and should be worshipped. When the Jews learned of this order, and that it was the intention to put these statues in Jerusalem, and even in the Temple itself, as well as elsewhere, their indignation and trouble knew no bounds. They gathered in great masses, young and old, to entreat the local governor to intercede for them that such a desecration of their holy temple and holy city and holy land should not be permitted. Speaking of one of these protest-gatherings, the historian says: “A vast throng, arranged in six columns of (1) old women, (2) matrons, (3) maids, (4) old men, (5) men in their strength, and (6) boys, gathered before the palace of the procurator, and threw themselves on the earth, with wild and piteous cries of despair, when he showed himself on the balcony. They declared they would die, but never give way. Petronius [the governor] made every effort to have the Emperor change the edict, but the most he could arrange was a command to leave the Temple untouched. But many altars were raised to the Emperor outside of its gates; and news came that all the synagogues in Alexandria had been turned into temples to Caesar. These things lasted till January, A. D. 41, on the 24th day of which Caligula was murdered.”

It is not surprising that such outside persecution and interference with their own religious rites and liberties caused the Jews to relax their persecutions of the Christians, and thus brought about the period of rest mentioned. Persecutors never like persecution for themselves. Those who have the mind of Christ are never persecutors; they feel it to be their bounden duty not to cooperate, not to assist, things which they believe to be wrong; they may even find it necessary or expedient to denounce the wrong, and to show up its inconsistencies; and in some instances to name the active agents in these wrong teachings and wrong doings—as the apostles have done on

several occasions in their writings. But as for persecuting others, the Lord's people can take no part in this: we are hindered by the spirit of love, the mind of Christ, which directs that we should do unto others as we would they should do unto us—our Golden Rule, our “perfect law of liberty.”

The record says that the churches were edified. This word edified carries in it the thought of construction or building. We get the thought, therefore, that this time of peace was a time of upbuilding amongst the little groups of the Lord's people in Palestine. There is a two-fold sense in which the church may be built up or edified—in numbers, and also in the graces of the spirit. Apparently the infant church was edified both ways. It was growing in numbers, and growing in grace. That the latter is included is shown by the following declaration, that the believers walked in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the holy spirit.

The Scriptures declare that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Psa. 111:10)—not a selfish fear; but a reverential fear; not a fear that the Lord is evil instead of good; not a fear that he will eternally torment or otherwise unjustly deal with his enemies; but a reverence of the Lord which recognizes his greatness and his goodness, appreciates the same, and fears to do aught that would be displeasing to him or that would separate from his love and favor. This proper kind of fear, which is the beginning of wisdom will never be lost, so long as the wisdom is maintained. We creatures of the dust “by nature children of wrath, even as others,” and transformed and renewed only by the Lord's grace and power and truth, must never lose sight of our own littleness and insufficiency, and of our complete dependence upon the Lord's mercy and favor. To lose sight of this would surely mean our fall. Hence, altho the Apostle declares that perfect love casteth out fear, we esteem his meaning in this passage to be the dread fear rather than reverential fear. Perfect love will cast out dread and slavish fear, but it will cultivate and stimulate and increase our reverence for the Lord; so that, as the Apostle again declares, even the advanced Christian who has lost his slavish fear, will, from love of God, and from a desire to please him and to attain the end which he has indicated for us, “fear, lest a promise being left us . . . any should seem to come short of it.”—1 John 4:18; Heb. 4:1.

But reverence of God was not the only grace developed in

the primitive church. To it was added the comfort of the holy Spirit. (The use of the word "ghost" as a translation of the Greek word *pneuma* is very unfortunate, and confusing to the English reader. The word should never be used. *Pneuma* should invariably be translated "spirit.") The holy Spirit is the spirit, mind or disposition of God; and the primitive church was cultivating this, developing it in their hearts, walking in it, that is, living it. The word *comfort* signifies united, cemented or strengthened together; and the thought of the passage as a whole, therefore, would be that the church was not only multiplying in numbers, and being edified or built up together as God's holy church or temple, but that the various "living stones" were being cemented or bound together by the holy Spirit. This is a forcible and graphic description of a glorious condition in the primitive church. It is what should be striven for by the Lord's dear people everywhere today as well; indeed it is as true of the true church of Christ now as it was then.

The thought of building together, building up, etc., when applied to the individual, signifies his own faith structure, which the Apostle tells us is to be composed of gold, silver and precious stones—divine truth and character—from which should be excluded all wood, hay and stubble of error, sin and hypocrisy. The same thought may be applied to the church assemblies in a slightly different way; for each little congregation of the church may be considered as a temporary temple, or abiding place of God in the world, as represented by his holy spirit indwelling. In a still larger sense the whole church in any period may be considered as God's temple, in which he representatively resides, and through which he speaks to such as have an ear to hear. It is in this sense of the word that the seven churches of Revelation represent the one church of the Lord throughout the world, in seven different epochs of its history. But let it be distinctly borne in mind that none of these proper enough uses of the word "temple," etc., interfere at all with the still larger, and still more exact thought respecting the divine temple, the church.

This still more exact thought is with reference to the church glorified, which has not been under construction, up-building, during the Gospel age, but is to be constructed speedily at the second advent of the Lord and the gathering together of his saints unto him. In this last view, be it noticed, each of the Lord's followers is symbolically a "living stone," now being chiseled, fitted, polished, prepared, for a place in the glorious temple, whose construction was delayed until the end of the age, when, as typified by Solomon's temple, each part will come together with exactness, "without the sound of a hammer,"—without the slightest need of trimming or altering any of those perfected ones, all of whom together will constitute the glorious Temple of God, which will be filled with his presence in the fullest and most complete sense, and constitute the center of his blessing and instruction to all the families of the earth during the Millennium;—"the New Jerusalem, which cometh down from God out of heaven."—1 Pet. 2:4-7; Rev. 21:27, 10; 1 Kings 6:7.

"THE SAINTS WHICH DWELT AT LYDDA"

We see from this narrative that altho the Apostles made Jerusalem the headquarters for their work they, nevertheless, went hither and thither throughout Judea, meeting with the Lord's people scattered by the previous persecution, etc., and forming *nuclei* of little congregations in every direction. In these travels Peter came to Lydda, the chief city in the Plain of Sharon (Saron), about midway between Jerusalem and Joppa—about ten miles from each; and his special mission, we are told, was the visiting of the saints. We like this word "saints." It signifies holy, set apart, sanctified believers in Christ. There is much opposition to the use of the word today, attributable, we believe, to two reasons. One is that the vast majority of professing Christians know that they are not saints, not sanctified, not living as near to the Lord as they could live,—not separate, even in heart, from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Such persons have strong reasons for disliking the word "saints," realizing that it would exclude them and nearly all of their friends and special associates in Christian work. Another reason for opposition to the word "saints" is that in the dark ages it became the custom for the Roman and Greek Catholic churches to "canonize," or legally set apart as objects of reverence, certain persons respecting whom, after several centuries had elapsed, nothing specially evil was remembered, but only things esteemed as honorable and praiseworthy. The word, saints, thus became separated from living Christians; and, indeed, this may have been because there were few Christians really so "alive toward God" as to be representatives of saintship. Another reason why some dislike this term, "saints," is that they consider it to be

rather boastful,—some would even say hypocritical; because having lost sight of "justification by faith" in its proper application they have become accustomed to think of and to pray for all Christians as "miserable sinners"—overlooking the fact that there are some in whom "the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled," because "walking not *after* the flesh, but *after* the spirit," the merit of Christ covers all their unwilling shortcomings.—Rom. 8:4.

The Lord's people, however, are to remember to apply and take pleasure in all the names and practises authorized by apostolic usage; and the term "saint" certainly thus approves itself to us. Almost all of the epistles of the New Testament are addressed to the saints; and those who can not properly apply the term to themselves can not properly apply to themselves the exceeding great and precious promises contained in those epistles,—for all the promises are addressed to and meant for the saints—the sanctified in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:9; Eph. 1:1, etc.) Let it be borne in mind that the word "saint" does not signify actual perfection, merely, as in our Lord's case, but also those *reckoned* holy through him; and that the apostles who were saints, and who classed themselves with the saints of God, declared respecting themselves, "We also are men of like passions with you."—Acts 14:15.

The term saints, then, properly applied in the church refers to those who altho originally "children of wrath, even as others," have been rescued from that condition of condemnation, and been washed, cleansed, and thus brought into accord with God through the forgiveness of their sins and the covering of their weaknesses and blemishes; and who, in connection with these blessings of God, and in appreciation of them, became the "sanctified in Christ Jesus" by making full consecration of themselves to live, not perfect lives (an impossibility), but as nearly perfect as they may be able;—the Lord's grace making them continually "holy, acceptable to God" the Father, through the merit of Christ Jesus. Let us not be ashamed of this name, "saints"; if it present before our minds saintship, holiness, separateness from the world, that is just the very thought which should be there continually. It is a thought which will help us, and enable us the better to live separate from the world, as our Master indicated, saying, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."—John 17:16.

"JESUS CHRIST MAKETH THEE WHOLE"

Our Golden Text is from Peter's words to Æneas, the paralytic, whom the Apostle found at Lydda and healed. We are not told that he was one of the saints; the presumption, therefore, is that he was not, but that at most he was a friend to some of them, and that thus the Apostle's attention was drawn to him. The fact that he had been bedfast, helpless, eight years, testified that the healing was a miracle. Its fame spread abroad, and resulted, we are told, in the drawing of many unto the Lord and to the church. Thus did the Lord establish the church and attract to it those who were in the right attitude of heart, using miracles then, as he now uses other means. Those miracles, as already pointed out, can not have lasted much longer than the apostles themselves; the gifts of healing, etc., being granted only through the laying on of the hands of the apostles—and the twelve had no successors—the heavenly Jerusalem had twelve foundations, and no more, and in them were written the names of the twelve apostles, and no others.

"THIS WOMAN WAS FULL OF GOOD WORKS"

One of the disciples, that is, one of the saints, residing at Joppa, on the seacoast, was apparently a woman of means and education, and if her name represented her appearance, she was very beautiful. Tabitha, in the Syriac language, Dorcas, in the Greek, signifies graceful, beautiful. But this woman was famed for a beauty and a grace entirely separate and distinct from whatever she possessed of these qualities naturally. Hers was the beauty of a meek and quiet spirit, full of love and helpfulness. She was a burning and a shining light for the Lord in that vicinity, evidently. She was not "a Bible reader," for there were no Bibles in the language of the people at that time. She was not a tract distributor nor a colporteur, for there was no printing done then; but she did what she could; she served the Lord, his brethren and all needing help, according to the best opportunities afforded her. She helped the poor, and particularly widows, who as a class at that time were apt to be in very trying position, especially if poor. Dorcas had been in the *habit* (the Greek text indicates) of assisting the poor with garments, etc., probably, almost certainly, assisting them also with words of encouragement and helpfulness, and ministering to them the truth. Under these circumstances it is not strange that her death should have produced sorrow, especially amongst the beneficiaries of her charities, and

* See MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. V Chap. 8.

amongst the numerous friends which a beautiful Christ-like spirit of this kind is sure to make.

While it is very true that the civilized conditions of the present time take from us many of the opportunities possessed by Dorcas, by supplying means of employment for poor widows and other indigent, and by providing County Homes, etc., for the needy, nevertheless, all who have the spirit of the Lord, which Dorcas had, and which she so nobly exemplified, will surely still find opportunities for laying down their lives, some way or other, in the service of the household of faith. As the Apostle says, "We ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3:16) Some one has suggested that possibly Dorcas was a martyr—that her death probably resulted from her service to others. A Christian poet has said of such as she:—

"These, tho their names appear not on the scroll
Of martyrologists, laid down their lives,
No less a martyrdom in Jesus' eyes—
For his dear brethren's sake;—watching the couch
Of loathsome sickness or of slow decay,
Or visiting the captive in his cell,
Or struggling with a burden not their own,
Until their weary life sinks slow away,
These, too, are martyrs, brother."

Yes, all of the Lord's saints are to be martyrs;—their consecration is to lay down their lives in the service of the Lord, the brethren and the truth; and as nearly as they can understand in the way which he shall direct them, through his Word and his providences. Our covenant is not one of self-preservation, but one of self-sacrifice. True, we are looking for and hoping for a life eternal and glorious as spirit beings; but the terms and conditions upon which we are scripturally hoping to attain that perfect and new life are that we shall sacrifice what remains of this present earthly life. Another thought, that comes in this connection, is that while, undoubtedly, our chief service under present conditions is the ministry of the spiritual food, spiritual drink and spiritual clothing, to the household of faith, yet nevertheless we are to remember that to the extent of our abilities and opportunities we are to do good unto all men, as the Apostle enjoins.

Everyone of the Lord's saints should be recognized in his neighborhood as of generous heart, of kindly impulses; whether he have dollars to give, or only pennies. Of kind words at least he should be noted as a giver, remembering that it is more blessed and more God-like, to give than to receive. And those who lack the wherewithal for generosity in this world's goods, so that they have nothing wherewith to minister in a temporal way, to the necessities of the saints or others, are not to forget that they have the still more precious, more valuable, more helpful, more cheering, consolations of the spirit of the truth, and kindness to dispense to such as are in any need. Would that all of the Lord's people would cultivate these Dorcas qualities, and thus become more and more beautiful and graceful in the eyes of their Lord as well as in the eyes of the world!

Today, as the traveler passes from Joppa, going toward Jerusalem, the guide shows him on the outskirts of Joppa, at the side of the public road, a large, and at one time very beautiful and costly, monument to Dorcas. It is a fountain at which many weary ones have refreshed themselves. The narrative of Dorcas' good works and Christ-likeness, like the waters of a fountain, have come down the rugged channel of the centuries,—encouraging, refreshing, and stimulating God's peo-

ple all the way. Nevertheless, quite probably some in her day spoke evil of her; perhaps even some who were the recipients of her favors may have declared that she performed her charities that she might glory in them, and to be seen and known of men, rather than for the love of those to whom she ministered: and such may be our experience, as we seek to do good unto all men as we have opportunity. But the fact that good may be evil spoken of must not deter us. We seek to please the Lord, and to cultivate in our hearts his spirit, and to exemplify this spirit before others, thus letting our light shine: this is our only proper course, whatever may be said of it by the skeptical world, or an envious class of "tares." We are to seek chiefly the approval of our Father and our Bridegroom;—to be content therewith, and to be content with nothing less.

Apparently Dorcas took sick and died suddenly, at about the time that others of the saints at Joppa heard of Peter's being at Lydda and the cure performed there. They sent for him immediately; probably with no thought of his performing such a miracle as to bring Dorcas back to life; but rather with the thought that they had lost a highly esteemed member of their little group, and that Peter could give them some consolation at this time. There was no telegraph or telephone or mail service then, and some of the brethren became the messengers to take the word to Peter,—to request his presence, and that he would not delay. In the city of Jerusalem a corpse must be buried the same day, but in the smaller cities and villages they might remain as much as three days unburied. Peter's presence was wanted without delay, before Dorcas would be buried; and he went at once.

An affecting scene was before Peter as he entered the death-chamber. Poor widows and others were lamenting the loss of their friend, and showing the garments which she had made for them. That surely was a noble tribute to the usefulness of her life. No millionaire has ever left monuments which will endure so long, or which will reflect so much glory upon his character, as were left by this humble woman. And even the humblest and poorest of us may to some extent emulate this example and leave some such monuments of love and testimonies of appreciation behind us when we die. It is a sad end when any, especially of those who have named the name of Christ, die and leave none who sincerely, truly, mourn for them and miss them. It testifies to a life that was either selfish or misunderstood. We who are looking forward to the close of our earthly journey, and that before very long, should see to it that our lives are spent day by day in such a manner that some will be the happier for them; and that our decease will be recognized by some, at least, as a loss.

Peter's most notable miracle was the bringing of Dorcas back from the portals of death. Like the other miracle, it was peculiar to that time, and for the special purpose of the establishment of the church. We are not to suppose that it was the Lord's intention that all of his people during this Gospel age should be thus snatched back from death, nor that they should be all relieved from beds of sickness, nor that they should all have powers such as the Apostle here exercised. There is a ministry of evil—of calamity, sickness, death, etc.,—which has often been valuable indeed to the Lord's people, inculcating various lessons and developing various fruits of the spirit, meekness, patience, gentleness, etc. Let us after consecrating our all to the Lord, and while using our consecrated all as wisely as we know how, accept whatever divine wisdom shall mete out to us. Let us remember our Lord's words,—*"The cup which my Father hath given (poured for) me, shall I not drink it?"*—John 18:11.

"GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS"

ACTS 10:34-44.—APRIL 20.

Many seem totally to misunderstand the Apostle's statement that "God is no respecter of persons";—they apply these words in a very different way from that in which the Apostle used them. The Apostle perceived that God is a respecter of character; but that he is not a respecter of outward appearances, conditions, color of skin, nationality, etc. That this is the Apostle's meaning is evidenced by his next statement "But in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted of him." It is a misapprehension, far too common, that anybody and everybody may come to the Lord upon terms of intimacy and familiarity. In consequence of such misapprehensions many approach the throne of heavenly grace without authority, without invitation, and without acceptance;—because (reversing the Apostle's words) they do not fear the Lord, are not workers of righteousness, and are not accepted with him. Lack of instruction, and misinformation by Chris-

tians, are responsible for much of this wrong condition existing in nominal Christendom. Let us learn to follow carefully the Scriptural program and precedent; let us not give the misimpression that God is no respecter of character. Let us, on the contrary, as Peter did, point out that reverence for God is an essential,—that an endeavor to live righteously is an essential,—a reformation of life, a turning from sin to righteousness; and that, even then, none can be acceptable to God except through the appointed way—faith in the atonement work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Cornelius, the centurion, whose acceptance with God is the subject of this lesson, was evidently converted to God and to righteousness years prior to this incident. This is the testimony;—he was a worshiper of God, a benevolent alms-giver, and his love of righteousness and his consistent life were recognized amongst those with whom he had to do; yet, neverthe-

less, something was necessary before he could be accepted with God in the proper sense of that word. There is a lesson here for those who imagine that a reverence of God and morality are all that are necessary to divine acceptance. As Cornelius had these qualities in large measure for some time before his acceptance, the Lord's dealing with him may well be a guide for all others who desire to approach him in covenant relationship.

Altho devout, etc., as we have seen, Cornelius was not a Jew; and realized himself to be outside the pale of special divine favor. Still he prayed to God;—we are not told for what he prayed, but in harmony with the records, we may readily suppose that he prayed for enlightenment respecting the divine character and plan, and for a closer approach and a realization of divine favor and acceptance. Perhaps he had heard of Jesus and was perplexed on this very subject; perhaps this led him to the earnest prayers which the Lord saw fit to answer in a miraculous manner, sending an angel to him, assuring him that his prayers and his alms were appreciated of the Lord as memorials of his piety. (Verse 4) The angel intimated that something further than prayers and good deeds was necessary; but the additional things the angel was not commissioned to tell. Cornelius needed to know of the Lord Jesus from the true standpoint; he must exercise faith in him as his Redeemer, before the memorials of his piety would count for anything with God, or bring him into the desired relationship and under the divine favor.

We know very well that the Lord could have promulgated the gospel through the instrumentality of angels; but here, as elsewhere, we see that this was not his purpose—that he was pleased to use consecrated human sons as his ambassadors, to proclaim the “good tidings of great joy—for all people.” What a great honor God has thus done us who “were by nature children of wrath, even as others” of the race, but who, having accepted divine favor in Christ, are not only “accepted in the Beloved” but are made the channels of divine blessing and favor in the calling out of others. The divine course in this respect has not only been an honor to his adopted children, but, additionally, it has been a blessing;—for what Christian does not know from experience that great blessing comes upon all who are faithful in serving the Word to others.

Cornelius was instructed to send for the Apostle Peter, and was informed in advance that certain words he would tell him were of importance;—essential to his further progress in knowledge and in faith,—and through these into divine favor. Cornelius' readiness of mind is shown by the promptness of his obedience. He not only prayed, but prepared to cooperate with God in the answering of his own prayer. The three persons sent (two of them household servants, and one of them a soldier, all devout persons, who feared God) give us good evidence that this Gentile who was feeling after God, and striving to the best of his ability to please and honor him, had not been keeping his light and his faith under a bushel. It had shone out before his family and servants, and before the soldiers under his control. This is the kind of man whom God delights to acknowledge, whatever may be his nationality or the color of his skin, and all such are recognized of the Lord, and favored above others with light and truth—ever since the close of typical Israel's special favor. There is a lesson here that some of the Lord's people need. It is that they should let the light of truth shine through them upon all with whom they come in contact,—that the spirit of devotion should pervade every family, every household, including the servants.

Evidently Cornelius was full of faith in the Lord. He did not wait to see if Peter would come; he knew that he would come; he had faith in the Lord's promise through the angel: accordingly he gathered together his friends and relatives and household—those upon whom he had been exercising an influence, and who, like himself, were pious and earnestly desirous of knowing all that they might learn concerning the way of life,—the way of reconciliation and harmony with God and all the principles of righteousness which he represents.

Meantime Peter, with all the prejudices belonging to the Jews for centuries, needed to be prepared to receive this first out-and-out Gentile brought into the church. This was done by means of a vision, so that Peter, with six brethren from Joppa, came promptly to the centurion's home on the following day—“doubting nothing,” because evidently the Lord was leading him in the matter. We see, too, that of all the disciples Peter was the best one to be chosen for this work, because of his impetuous disposition and zeal to follow the Lord's directions quickly and heartily; secondly, because being the oldest of the apostles, and in many respects the most influential one, his course would have the greater weight with the others. It is difficult for us to conceive the prejudice of centuries, in the minds of the Jews, against any thought of the Gentiles being

fellow-heirs with them of the Abrahamic promises. They considered it a settled matter that God's favor had been set apart to their nation; and that it could not possibly go outside that nation to others, in the sense of making those others equally acceptable to God. These views were based, first, upon the promises of God to Abraham, “Thy seed,” etc.; secondly, upon the fact that Israelites were not permitted to have general dealings with the Gentiles, nor to intermarry with them; thirdly, added to all this, the rulers of the Jews had even gone further, and exaggerated to some extent these differences.

But now a new dispensation had come: the “seventy weeks” of favor to Israel had expired; and the Lord began to extend his favor beyond the Jews—as we have already seen, to the Samaritans and the Ethiopian eunuch. We may readily suppose that those innovations, altho causing surprise to the apostles, would be much easier for them to grasp than the extension of favor to the Gentiles: they perhaps paved the way to the latter. When Peter arrived at the house of Cornelius, and the latter saw him and recognized him as God's appointed servant for the bringing of this message to him, he prostrated himself at Peter's feet in worship. How different Cornelius was from the majority of Romans,—especially of Roman soldiers and officers! Instead of looking down upon the Jew,—instead of thinking of himself as a representative of the great government in the world, at the time, Cornelius was filled with the spirit of humility, and the fact that his visitor represented the Lord called forth from him some of the same feelings that were filling his heart in respect to the Lord himself,—feelings of reverence.

But if the centurion was noble and humble, the Apostle Peter showed himself in response to be no less noble and loyal to God—for he at once began to lift up the centurion, saying, “Stand up; I myself also am a man.” (Verse 26) Peter commends himself to our hearts by this noble course—by this refusal to receive unauthorized homage; and he saved himself also from a great deal of trial by thus disowning supernatural honor and authority promptly,—by recognizing his true position, that he was only a broken and emptied vessel, valuable only because of the filling of the vessel with the Lord's spirit;—distinguished only because the Lord had been pleased to use him as a vessel of mercy and truth. Not many today are disposed to offer worship to fellow-creatures, and not many, except high dignitaries in the nominal churches, such as popes and prelates, consent to receive worship; but all such have a rebuke in the course of the Apostle Peter in this case. There is perhaps little danger in our day that any of the “brethren” would receive too much honor of men, because the spirit of our time is running in the opposite direction. Nevertheless, wherever a spirit of sevility is manifest, it becomes the duty of the brother to whom it is offered to refuse it; and to point his fellow-servant to the Lord, as the real benefactor of us all.—from whom comes every good and perfect gift, by whatever channels he may be pleased to use.

“WORDS WHEREBY THOU SHALT BE SAVED”

Peter coming into the house, and finding a congregation of earnest God-fearing Gentiles assembled, asked the pointed question. “For what intent have ye sent for me?” (Verse 29) Cornelius then related something of his past experience, his desire for fellowship with God, his endeavor to live in a manner pleasing to him, the vision that he had received, and now Peter's arrival in response to that vision, and his expectancy that he was about to hear what had been promised him—“words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.” (Acts 11:14) He was not saved by his almsgiving, not saved by his prayers, nor yet by the message which Peter delivered; but Peter's message, “words,” explaining matters, enabled Cornelius and his household to grasp by faith the great redemption which is in Christ Jesus,—and thus to be saved. Saved at once from alienation from God and from condemnation, as sinners; a foretaste of the complete salvation to be granted unto them at the second coming of the Lord.

We note with keen interest the Apostle's preaching, that we may clearly discern the life-giving message which he brought, from which Cornelius and his associates derived their saving faith. We find that Peter's discourse was the same gospel message which he had delivered repeatedly before. It was Jesus—the good, the obedient—and the sacrifice for sins which he accomplished when he died on the cross. It was the message of the hope of a resurrection from the dead through him, as attested by his resurrection by the mighty power of God. It was the message that a ransom for sinners having been paid to Justice the Lord is now pleased to accept sinners on conditions of faith, reverence and obedience to righteousness according to ability. Peter's discourse was “the old, old story” which to many has become tedious and distasteful; but

which to every soul, in the right attitude, is the Father's message of forgiveness of sins, and reconciliation, through the death of his Son. This is the same message which God is still sending by all who are his true ambassadors. There is no other gospel, and those who present another message are not, in their service, ambassadors for God, messengers and mouth-pieces of his spirit.

The Apostle Paul tells us that "It pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save them which believe"—that is, it pleased God to adopt this method of declaring the truth respecting his redemptive plan, and to accept and justify those who would believe and accept and testify those who would believe and accept this testimony. The testimony may reach people today through letters or tracts or books, or through oral preaching; it matters not in what manner; it merely matters that the true message shall be delivered, and received; but the message goes, invariably, through the human channel, and not through angels, nor by the holy Spirit's power or operation aside from human agents. We are to bear in mind these lessons of God's methods, and to apply them appropriately in connection with the affairs of life. We are not to expect the Lord to move upon or instruct our friends or kindred or neighbors; but are to remember that this honor he has conferred upon his "royal priesthood;" and accordingly we are to be "not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;"—serving the truth in any and every manner open to us.

After telling the message itself, Peter explained to Cornelius that Jesus commanded the apostles to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead. (Verse 42) The coming judgment, or trial, of the world, is an important part of the gospel message; and is not to be neglected in the preaching of the gospel.

What advantage could accrue to the world through the death of Christ if there were no future judgment or trial for them? All were judged once in the person of Adam; and his condemnation passed upon all. The world needs no further judgment along the lines of the Adamic transgression and its weaknesses. The sentence for that transgression was complete, and leaves nothing that could be added;—the Judge was Jehovah himself, and the sentence was death. And now the good tidings includes the fact that Christ is to be the Judge of the world—which signifies that a new trial for life is to be accorded to Adam and his race. This of itself implies a release from the original death sentence; it implies a redemption from Adam's sentence, and an individual trial to determine which members of the redeemed and to-be-tried race will be accounted worthy of everlasting life. Yes, this is "good tidings of great joy" for the world;—even though the great adversary has deluded the vast majority, even of Christians, into thinking to the contrary—that no new trial such as Adam had at first is to be granted to the whole world, bought with the precious blood of Christ.

All are witnesses that this trial could not have begun before Jesus became the Judge—hence that none of those who had died in the four thousand years preceding could have been judged by him;—none of them could have been on trial for eternal life. All should likewise be aware of the fact that the world in general has not been on trial since our Redeemer was appointed the Judge, and that it is not on trial today;—that, on the contrary, the great mass of the world neither knows the Judge nor understands the law, nor has any conception of the conditions and requirements necessary to life everlasting. This agrees exactly with the statement of Peter, under consideration; and it agrees also with the statement of the Apostle Paul, "God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." (Acts 17:31) The appointed day, as the Apostle indicates, was still future in his day, and is still future in our day. That day, as we see from other Scriptures, is the Millennial day, "a day with the Lord, a thousand years." (2 Pet. 3:8) The only judgment—trial—since our Lord's resurrection, which has resulted to any, determining the question of life or death eternal, has been to the church. The church, as spiritual Israel, has had much advantage every way over the remainder of mankind; because, during this Gospel age, it is being "called of God according to his purpose,"—that the overcomers may be joint-heirs with Jesus in his coming work of judging the world. "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?"

Peter, in discoursing on the matter, evidently had his mind more widely opened than ever before to a realization of what our Lord meant in giving the general commission to preach the Gospel, not merely to the Jews, but to whoever would have an ear to hear. Peter was not expecting "ears" amongst the Gentiles; but now he perceived that God was not a respecter of nations and features, etc., but that the message was open for all, and he did his best to present it. He proceeded to show

that Jesus, as the Messiah, was not evidenced merely by the things connected with his ministry, and the ministry of his followers; but that all these things were foreknown to God, and planned, and foretold through the holy prophets of Israel, and that only in and through the name and merit of Jesus,—only to those exercising faith in him, was God pleased to show a reconciled face, and from such only was he willing to take away all sin and shame, and to adopt them into his family.

Cornelius and his devout household and friends had been waiting for just such a message of divine grace; and as the words fell from Peter's lips they were quickly and gladly appropriated in the hearts of his hearers, who were by this time accepting Jesus with the same fullness and appreciation as Peter himself. Their hearts being thus in the right condition before God, it would have been appropriate for Peter to have said to them, Now, brethren, your proper course will be to be baptized into Jesus by a water baptism—symbolizing your faith in him and your full consecration to be dead with him, as his faithful followers. But Peter was not ready to take such a step, we may be sure. He was surprised that God was willing that the Gentiles should even know about the wonderful provisions of salvation in Jesus; which of itself would have been a blessing. But he was not yet prepared to expect that the Gentiles would be received of the Lord on practically the same terms, and with exactly the same manifestations of divine favor as were the Jews. To make good Peter's insufficiency of knowledge to baptize them, and to lay his hands upon them that they might receive the gifts of the spirit,—and as a lesson to Peter also,—the holy Spirit was given to Cornelius and his companions without the laying on of hands—in the same manner that it was bestowed upon the assembly at Pentecost.

Peter quickly learned the lesson, and undoubtedly his readiness to learn it was in large measure due to his humility and sincerity of heart, the fullness of his consecration to the Lord, and his desire that the divine will should be done in every particular. Peter and his companions from Joppa, "they of the circumcision," were astonished at God's favor upon the Gentiles, yet they were not envious. They were glad to welcome as cleansed, as brothers, all whom the Lord indicated that he had received into his fellowship. The result of this outpouring of the spirit was a grand testimony meeting. The record is that they "magnified God," praising him, rejoicing in their acceptance, etc. Then Peter drew their attention to the symbolical baptism and the propriety of observing it. We are not given his arguments on the subject; possibly he explained that in thus publicly symbolizing their consecration to the Lord they would be strengthening their own faith; but—tressing their own determination to live and die the Lord's; possibly, too, he showed them how beautiful is the significance of the water immersion as a symbol of death and burial with Christ; as a symbol also of a resurrection to newness of life in the present time and to a newness of life in perfect bodies at the second advent of the Lord. Or possibly he merely contented himself with explaining to them that it was the Lord's own method of doing, and that he commanded that all of his followers should similarly be immersed.

Having called for an expression from those present—especially from the brethren who accompanied him from Joppa—to know if any objection could be thought of why these dear brethren, who had believed in the Lord, who had given evidence of their consecration and good works, even before they knew of the Lord and his glorious plan, and who now had been accepted of God, and his acceptance manifested—why these should not be admitted to every blessing and arrangement which God had provided for his faithful ones—irrespective of their being Gentiles by birth. No objection being offered Peter commanded [directed] them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. He had been sent to teach them, and he delivered his message with no uncertain sound. Similarly the Lord directs all of his people, all who have an ear to listen and to hear his message, through the Apostle Peter, in this lesson. We command no one, for we have no authority; we are not apostles. We can merely point out the command of the apostle; the example of all the apostles; the example of our Lord, etc., and leave the matter with the "ear" and conscience of each. Indeed, where we recognize that the true immersion of the will, into the will of Christ, has been accomplished, we may properly recognize the brother or sister in full fellowship, even though he or she has not performed the outward symbolic immersion in water; because we are living in a time when great confusion on this subject prevails, and when it would be improper that we should cast off, reject, or even temporarily disfellowship any brother or sister who gives evidence of having had the real antitypical baptism into Christ. For a general examination of the question of baptism, see our issue of June 15, 1893.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

'ELSE WERE YOUR CHILDREN UNHOLY'

Question.—The Apostle says in 1 Cor. 7:13 that "the believing husband sanctifieth the unbelieving wife; likewise the believing wife sanctifieth the unbelieving husband; else were your children unholy, but now are they holy." (1) In what sense of the word does the believing one sanctify the unbeliever? Is it not the truth that sanctifies? and is it not God who sanctifies through the truth? and is it not ourselves he sanctifies in the sense of setting apart to the Lord and to his service? What does the Apostle mean by a different statement? (2) In what sense are the children holy in this text? Is there any imputed holiness? Can they be said to be partakers of the divine nature through their parents? What does the Apostle mean?

Answer.—The words "sanctify" and "holy," as used in this text, do not have at all the same signification that is properly attached to them elsewhere in the Scriptures. The Apostle is discussing the fact that amongst the consecrated of the Lord's people were some unequally yoked with unbelievers—married to unbelievers before receiving the truth and coming under the enlightening influence of the spirit of truth and counsel from above through the Word.

The question discussed is respecting the holiness of the children born of mixed (believing and unbelieving) parentage. Would such children be counted strangers, aliens and foreigners to God and his favor, because of the unbelieving parent, or would they occupy the relationship of favor with God through the believing parent? This important question is not so clearly discerned today as it was in the days of the apostles, when people knew from the Jewish pattern that all the posterity of Adam shared in his fall and in the condemnation which came upon all through him, and that all by nature were "children of wrath." (Eph. 2:3) They perceived that Israel had been lifted out from amongst the nations by the Lord through a Law Covenant, and that all born into that nation were born under the terms of that covenant, while all born outside of it were strangers and aliens and foreigners to God and his provisions. Now they understood that a New Covenant had been introduced, taking the place of the Law Covenant; but they could readily discern that as it requires some means of coming under the Law Covenant in order to be recipients of its favors, so now it requires some process to come under the terms of favor represented in the New Covenant. They could see that the believing husband or the believing wife would be under the New Covenant, but they could see equally that the unbelieving husband or unbelieving wife would have neither part nor lot in the matter. The query which the Apostle is answering may be stated thus: How about our children? Must we wait until they come to years of discretion before we can introduce them to the Lord, and consider them to be under his protection, if they then accept him? or is there any way in which children might be brought under the terms of the New Covenant? The Apostle's answer is that God counts the children as belonging to whichever parent belongs to him; and thus counting the children, they are reckonedly treated of him, not as sinners, but as without sin, that is, justified. As the unjustified state is a state of sin, so the justified state is one of removal or covering or passing over of sin, and hence one of holiness—

though not what is generally represented as holiness in the Scriptures, through an entire consecration to the Lord as living sacrifices. Such children partaking of the justification of their parents, might properly be considered as belonging to the "household of faith," although they had not in any sense of the word become saints, by a presentation of themselves as living sacrifices. Hence also they could not in any sense of the word be considered "members of the body of Christ," nor as being begotten of the spirit of adoption to the spiritual nature.

As respects the sense in which the believing husband or wife sanctifies the unbelieving one: The thought is that in the exercise of the procreative powers the Lord's favor upon his consecrated child extends, to this necessary degree, to the partner in life—so that the children shall not be counted as partially the Lord's and partially children of wrath; but shall be counted as entirely the Lord's and as under his protection and care during the period of infancy, to the same extent as is the believing parent.

IF ANY MAN DRAW BACK

Question.—A brother who has manifested considerable interest in present truth in the past, seems to have lost it to some extent, and has re-united with the denominational sect he withdrew from previously. In what position would you think such a course places an individual? What is the right and wrong involved in such conduct?

Answer.—(1st) While we may safely reckon that many members of denominations are properly true children of God, and may properly fellowship them as brethren in Christ, notwithstanding the fact that they are still in Babylon, and blind to the harvest message, yet the case seems quite different when we apply it to those who by God's grace have once been delivered out of Babylon, and who return thither "as a dog to his vomit, as a sow that was washed to wallowing again in the mire," of sectarianism and blasphemy against God. I think this is a case such as the Apostle Peter mentions, where "it would have been better for them that they had never known the way or righteousness, than that they should know it and turn again from the holy commandment."—2 Pet. 2:21, 22.

(2) However, on the question of *right*, I suggest that it is all *right* that those who are not appreciative of the light should go into the outer darkness. It is all *right*, because it is the divine arrangement, that those who have tasted of the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and have not appreciated them, should lose them. We are not saying that they lose them forever; that is not for us to decide, but for ourselves we safely can say—

"My soul, be on thy guard:
Ten thousand foes arise.
The hosts of sin are pressing hard
To draw thee from the prize.

"Ne'er think the victory won,
Nor once at ease sit down;
Thine arduous work will not be done
Till thou hast gained thy crown."

THE MEMORIAL SUPPER

APRIL 20TH, 1902.

As already announced, the true anniversary date for the commemoration of our Lord's Memorial Supper, according to Jewish Passover. By this the first Friday after the 14th of April 20th, after six o'clock. The fact that Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, and others, will this year celebrate Good Friday as its memorial, nearly three weeks earlier than the true date, has caused confusion of thought to some, who have written inquiring if we had not miscalculated. We answer, No. The discrepancy is the result of a change of method of counting, adopted in the second century for the purpose of avoiding the Jewish Passover. By this the first Friday after the 14th of the Jewish month, Nisan, took the place of the irregular days upon which the 14th of Nisan itself would occur. Later this was confirmed by the Council of Nice,—“which decreed that Easter (Passover) should be celebrated throughout the church after the equinox, on the Friday following the 14th of Nisan.”—*McClintock & Strong's Ecclesiastical Encyclopedia*.

We still pursue the earliest method of reckoning, which was long and strenuously defended by the churches of Asia Minor, to whom most of St. Paul's epistles were addressed;—counting Nisan from the Spring equinox, the usual Jewish method, and letting the date fall as it may on any day of the week. Re-

specting this early observance, the authority quoted above (*McC. & S. E. Encyclopedia*) says:—

“In the earliest ages of the church, the day of our Lord's crucifixion was religiously observed, not independently, but as part of the sacred season of Easter [Passover] which was celebrated by Christians instead of the Jewish Passover, in commemoration at once of the death and resurrection of Christ.”

* * *

The meaning of this Memorial Supper and its appropriateness at the time and manner of commemorating our Lord's death has already been presented in these columns. (March 1st, 1898, Dec. 1st, 1901).

We hope that the celebration this year will be quite general among our readers;—not only where there are little groups or churches to assemble themselves, but also where there are only “two or three” to meet in the Lord's name; or where solitary individuals must perforce celebrate alone. We are solicitous because we know that those who observe it in the right spirit will have a special blessing and uplift, and that those who neglect it will miss correspondingly.

The Allegheny church will convene for the celebration at