

in public services of the church to other congregations, and that his words therefore do not apply at the present time. This is sophistry, false reasoning. The epistles to the Corinthians were not written to the debauchees, neither male nor female, of that time, but to the saints at Corinth, both male and female; and a saint at Corinth meant exactly the same thing as a saint elsewhere, namely, one whose life had turned from sin to righteousness, and who, accepting Christ as his Savior, had made full consecration of all to him.

Indeed it would appear that the Apostle's strictures on woman's sphere came from the opposite quarter—that the church at Corinth seemed to feel itself superior to the other congregations, and desired to grasp liberties for its women which the other churches never thought of. Hence the Apostle after rebuking them asks, "What? came the Word of the Lord out from you? [Did it originate with you? Are we to look to the Christians at Corinth as the expounders of the message?] or came it unto you merely? [Did you not receive the Gospel as others received it? Do you not admit that you were not the originators of it? You have, therefore, nothing whatever to do with adding to or changing its regulations. As you will see this matter in its correct light you will agree that you should receive the message of the grace of God in the line in which he sent it, and should obey it without thought of alteration or emendation to suit some supposed preferential teachings in your midst.] (1 Cor. 14:36.) "The faith once delivered to the saints" is not a variable but a fixed one. Hence the Apostle urges "that ye all mind the same things."

Another line of sophistry used to make void the teachings of the Scriptures on this subject seeks its object by handling the Word of God deceitfully: By taking the statement of Colossians 3:18, twisting it about so as to give it a different meaning from its proper one, and then using that improper twist in connection with all other Scriptures bearing on the subject. The passage in question reads, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit, in the Lord." The meaning of these words should be evident to everyone; they are very distinct. They tell the Christian wife that her relationship to the Lord, the liberty wherewith Christ makes free indeed, does not annul her relationship to her husband, whether he be in Christ or be not in Christ; and that she still owes to her husband the duty of a wife; that the wife in the divine order is not the head of the family, and that it is the duty of the wife to be submissive (in all matters which do not involve conscience—which would include all matters which would seriously endanger health).

The Apostle points out that this is the fit course—the course which he has elsewhere pointed out to be the proper one also for the natural man or woman; for he distinctly declares that the primacy of the man in the family was established at creation, and that the man was created not to be the helpmate of the woman, but the woman to be the helpmate of the man. This is the fit course in nature; and in this verse the Apostle declared that it is still the fit course as respects the Christian wife ("fit in the Lord") after she has been received into the liberty of the family of God. In other words, she has a relationship of heart and conscience to God and a relationship in the flesh to her husband; and these are not to be understood

to conflict but are in full agreement under the Lord's arrangement.

Do you ask how sophistry could change the plain statement of this verse? We reply that it attempts to do so by juggling with the word "fit," and implying that the Apostle means that the wife should subject to her husband as *her mind tells her would be fit* and proper. Of course the minds of many women would never tell them that it was fit or proper to be subject to their husbands, and according to this false, sophistical interpretation they would be following the Apostle's injunction by violating the spirit of his Word in this text. After establishing this fallacious thought in the mind—and it seems to appeal to the natural mind of some,—this philosophy which seeks to upset the teaching of God's Word, while apparently remaining loyal to it, proceeds to deal with all the other texts of Scripture which relate to the wife's relationship to her husband, by saying that they must all be understood and interpreted in harmony with this declaration of the Apostle, "if it is fit," meaning as the woman sees fit in her judgment and certainly not as the husband would see fit. The Apostle on the contrary is saying that the *submission* of the wife to the husband is the *fit*, proper course "in the Lord" as also in nature.

As before stated, we realize that many women, both in and out of the truth, suffer great hardships at the hands of inconsiderate and sometimes brutal husbands; and in view of our knowledge of this fact nothing would be further from our natural disposition than to give such advice respecting general submission. Rather, our natural mind on the subject would have been resistance, self-assertion, contending for rights, etc. But as we have learned not to follow our own inclinations and judgment in respect to our own matters, interests and rights, so we have learned and are more and more learning to advise others to most carefully follow not their own combativeness nor their own ambitions in these matters, but that if they would be overcomers and win the crown they should hearken to him who speaketh from heaven.

We surmise that a large proportion of the trouble that is coming upon the world in general will be the result of discontent, which we expect to see increasing year by year until the turmoil of anarchy shall ruin all except those who shall have submitted their wills to the Lord and waited for him to establish righteousness and justice in the earth. We urge upon the Lord's people, male and female, all the fruits and graces of the Spirit,—meekness, gentleness, patience, long suffering, brotherly kindness, love. We assure them, in harmony with the Word, that whether such conduct on their part be lovingly received and appreciated, or whether it shall bring them increased trials and oppositions and injustice, nevertheless the peaceable fruits of righteousness prevailing in their hearts will bring them the peace of God which passeth all understanding even in the present life, and will prepare them the more surely for the kingdom and its glories and honors. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, he that exalteth himself shall be abased." "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. For it is written, he giveth his favor to the humble, but resisteth the proud," the self-assertive.—Luke 14:11; Jas. 4:6.

VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER

CHANGE IN CHURCHIANITY'S METHODS

The Editor of the Cincinnati *Enquirer* says:—

"The churches of the country enter so largely into the character and direction of its growth, and accomplish so much that is helpful in various ways in the uplifting of society, that information as to their progress is of interest to readers outside as well as inside their varied folds. No one can fail to notice how much in a general way their teaching and aims have changed with the times, and to how large an extent sectarian differences and angularities are disappearing and being disregarded. Fifty years ago churches were looked upon chiefly as divinely constituted organizations, insuring their members safe passage to and first-class accommodations in a better world, and their teaching was mostly along theological and doctrinal lines. Every sect, while doubting the efficiency of the insurance provision in the tickets of all rivals, was wholly confident of its own, and missions to the heathen were urged on the ground that unless converted they were all doomed to everlasting punishment for not accepting what they had never heard of. This world was not worth thinking about; the worse

off we were here the better it would be for us in the next, and vice versa.

"It is wonderful how complete and rapid the change has been. The churches now are trying to emphasize points of agreement, rather than of difference, and are working harmoniously together for moral and humanitarian ends. Theology and doctrine have been sent to the rear, and it is recognized that the true work of the church is here and now in making this world a happier and better place for everybody to live in, on a basis of unselfishness and brotherly love. In this effort agnostic and churchman, Jews and infidels, are working together, and what a man believes is regarded as of comparatively little consequence."

* * *

How clearly those whose eyes are opened to the true teachings of the Bible can see that the difficulty of the writer of the above and the general difficulty of Christendom is that the Truth of divine revelation has been buried under nonsensical human traditions which make the gospel an absurdity to them.

There are two views of this matter. (1) If Christianity be

merely a human contrivance, then no doubt it is safer and saner to disregard doctrine entirely and turn to fighting graft and political corruption, etc. (2) But if Christianity is a divine institution which calls for the submission of plans and schemes and teachings to the divine eternal purpose, then the present movement is a repudiation of God and Christ from Christianity. Hence we prefer to speak of the present institutions as *Churchianity*.

The Editor, above, surely voices the sentiment of nearly all of the worldly-wise, and we who differ appear to his class as "fools." Let us, however, stick to the Lord and his promises. Let us still believe that all the woes of earth came as the penalty of "original sin," and that Christ has redeemed the world and is about to roll away the curse and uplift and restore all the families of the earth to the extent that they will accept his favors, in due time. Let us preach that coming uplift as his work and acknowledge that all that selfishness will permit under present conditions will be as nothing compared with the real uplift coming in God's own appointed way, and in no other. By and by the collapse of present institutions will discourage others, but will more than ever convince us that God is moving in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.

Meantime let us give special heed to the message and work given us by our Lord, however foolish it may appear to others. We see that the present is the time for finding and polishing the Lord's jewels; the time for selecting, electing, the royal priesthood and schooling them for their coming service in glory—blessing all the families of the earth.—Gal. 3:29.

THE BIBLE BECOMING OBSOLETE

President G. S. Hall of Clark University declares:—

"There have been within the last few years a number of questions printed and sent broadcast to high schools and Sunday schools to test the knowledge of the Bible of high school and Sunday school students. All the questions have shown the school students to be amazingly defective in their knowledge, and particularly of the Old Testament. The reason has been discussed a great deal, and it seems to be that the Sunday school and home influence is diminishing. The Bible is less read in the home than it was a few years ago, and the number of children who have a fair knowledge of it is growing less and less. This shows the Bible is becoming obsolete.

"Professors of literature, even in colleges, have complained that students who have matriculated show an amazing lack of knowledge of the Bible. The Bible is becoming obsolete, and

this fact has been exploited many times in the last ten years. In my opinion a knowledge of the Bible should be made a requirement in English of all colleges."

* * *

This speaker merely referred to the Bible as *Literature*. Those of us who recognize it as the divine revelation must see to it that it does not become obsolete with us. The world can do without the Bible: indeed it was not given by God to the world, but "once delivered to the saints." To those actuated by faith and consecration the Bible is now and growingly the greatest of all books. Thank God for the "key of knowledge," by which its riches of treasure are now coming more than ever to our view.

THE NEW IDOLATRY

BY REV. WASHINGTON GLADDEN

To a very large extent the worship of Mammon has supplanted the worship of God. It is not a mere lip service, it is a living allegiance. It is by their works that the devotees prove their faith. We know that they believe in Mammon more than in God, for their lives give clear and abundant testimony. The evidences of this devotion are visible on every side. To what other cause can we attribute the evils that infest the government of our cities and that fill many of our State capitals with the stench of rotten politics; that turn many of our railway systems into gigantic instruments of extortion and build up a mighty enginery of finance with power to exploit the savings of a nation for the enrichment of a few?

Their actions prove that the real object of their faith and allegiance is Mammon. In their hearts they believe that Mammon is stronger and greater than God; that he is a better protector and friend than God; that he can do more for them than God can do. When the claims of Mammon and of God conflict their conduct makes it perfectly clear in whom they put their trust.

But these instances which I have mentioned are not exceptional. They are striking illustrations of tendencies which we see at work on every side. They are symptoms of a constitutional malady. Love of money, faith in money, devotion to material things has become the prevailing distemper of the time. It was doubtless true when the Apostle said it, but it is probably ten times truer now than it was then, that the love of money is the root of every kind of evil.—*Kansas City Star*.

RECENT ONE-DAY CONVENTIONS

At Springfield, Ill., we had a delightful season on June 24. The friends had worked hard and the Lord had blessed the wide advertising, so that the public service was attended by 1,400, a very large audience for the size of the city. Surrounding cities were well represented, and an excellent spirit was manifested at all the meetings, the morning one being a rally and testimony service, and the evening one a discourse to the interested, already reported to you through the public prints.

The Allegheny Convention, July 1, was well attended by friends from nearby towns, the local congregation and the public, to the number of about 700. At the evening service five were baptized. The spirit of the Lord was richly with us and showed in the faces of all.

Hartford, Conn., had a very successful Convention July 11. Friends from New York City, Boston, Springfield and various other nearer places were in good evidence and helped greatly as well as encouraged the little class at Hartford, which is growing rapidly. The Rally was good. The afternoon service for the public was attended by about 900 people, who gave excellent attention. The evening session for the interested at "City Mission" was attended by about 300, and about 50 accepted invitations to remain over for a Monday morning Question Meeting. The joys of the Lord were with us richly and we feasted on both temporal and spiritual good things.

REPORT OF THE LONDON CONVENTION

Dear Brother Russell:—

It is with much thankfulness to the Lord for his many mercies that we send you a report of the London Convention, June 2-4. Our loving heavenly Father has indeed poured out his blessing upon those who have sought him. The brethren came with their hearts full of loving gifts of praise and devotion, and the promise has been fulfilled to the extent of our capacity to receive. There was a general consensus of thought that the time had been laden with blessings from the Father's hand: and probably this was because the brethren had first brought their gifts into the storehouse. We are so much inclined to expect things that we forget ourselves and self gets to the front; our minds are so set on the good we are to get or on the good times we are to have, that we often hinder the blessing from the Lord. But on this occasion the brethren did appear to come to give—first themselves to the Lord, then to the brethren, and our gracious Lord gave to us according to his Word. It was good to see the effect of the gatherings upon those who had not hitherto been to a convention of this kind: to some of these the days were as the days of a new happy life, a foretaste of the good to come, and

we know that they were as "red letter days" in their experience. As seems to be the usual experience in convention, the fellowship was the great stimulant, and as the numbers of the Lord's people were greater than on previous occasions, and as, therefore, there was more of the holy Spirit with us, it was to be expected that most good was done and gained. The addresses were good and helpful, and surely added to the experience and the wisdom and knowledge of the dear brethren.

There were 40 brothers and sisters who symbolized by immersion their consecration to the Lord, and amongst these was my daughter. We know that to some of these this service was a solemn time, for just before them is a time of trial into which they must enter; and we thanked the Lord for their faith in him, for their willingness to walk in the valley of the shadow if the Good Shepherd chose so to lead. The Lord add his blessing to these dear sheep, and to all his own! At the close of the last meeting by vote a message of loving greeting was sent to you.

There was, quite apparently, a feeling in the Convention that the time of our labor is drawing to a close, and that there is need for wisdom and grace to direct the energy aright,

that the remaining work may be done to best advantage. We remembered the dear brethren scattered abroad, and all the work which is being done throughout the world; and we prayed for it, and for you, dear brother, that the grace of the Lord

may continue to sustain you in your arduous labors for the kingdom and for the brethren.

With much love in the Lord, I am your brother and fellow servant,
J. HEMERY.

BEREAN BIBLE STUDY ON LOVE

SEE COMMENTS IN OUR JULY 1 ISSUE

AUGUST 5

15. Why is love called "the mark"? Z. '01-97 (1st col. ¶ 3) to 8 (1st col. ¶ 3).
16. What are the four "quarter-marks" of the Christian race-course? F. 187, ¶ 2, to 189, ¶ 1; F. 369, ¶ 2, to 373.
17. How does the Church's experience differ from that of her "Forerunner"? F. 187, ¶ 1.

AUGUST 12

18. What is the significance of love as "the girdle"? Col. 3:14. Z. '99-142 (1st col. ¶ 2).
19. How is love the ultimate "end of the commandment"? 1 Tim. 1:5; Z. '00-360 (2nd col. ¶ 1, 2).
20. How is love the "fulfilling of the Law"? Rom. 13:10. Z. '05-121 (1st col. ¶ 3 to 2nd col. ¶ 1).

AUGUST 19

21. How is love the "law of the New Creation"? F. 364, ¶ 1, to 367, ¶ 2.
22. Why is love called "the perfect law of liberty"? Jas. 1:25. F. 377, 378; Z. '99-57; (2nd col. ¶ 2, 3); 58 (1st col. ¶ 1); Z. '03-43 (1st col. ¶ 2) to 45.

AUGUST 26

23. How are the "fruits of the Spirit" but different manifestations of love? F. 186, ¶ 1, 2.
24. How may we discern the true fruits of the holy Spirit? Z. '05-123 (2nd col. ¶ 1, 2) and 124.
25. How is "zeal the measure of love"? Luke 7:41-43. Z. '97-242 (1st col. ¶ 1 and 2nd col.); Z. '05-153 (2nd col. ¶ 3).

"IT IS HIGH TIME TO AWAKE OUT OF SLEEP"

"And do this knowing the season, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand."—Rom. 13:11, 12.

Previous to this exhortation the Apostle had been giving some wholesome counsel concerning the proper course of the Lord's people in the every-day duties of life. His advice seems to cover a wide range of the little vexing cares and trials that every one must meet, and shows us how to triumph in them through the mighty power of love. He evidently thought of the thin veneer of politeness in the world which so often covers deep-seated selfishness, and showed that our politeness and love should be only the genuine solid article, saying, "Let love be without dissimulation [pretence or hypocrisy]. Abhor that which is evil [abhor all shams and pretence]; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another; in honor preferring one another." He thought of the temptations and vexations of our business intercourse with the world, and of its natural tendency to engross time, energy and thought in worldly things, and therefore counselled, not that we should give up all business, but that, while we should be energetic and "not slothful in business," we should be careful always to be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

He thought of the depressing tendency of the ever-present cares of life, and of the persecutions in one form or another that are sure to come to those who will live godly; and so, while admitting that no trial can for the present be otherwise than grievous, he tells us that we may rejoice *in hope*; for the trial will not continue forever, and by and by it will bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness if we are rightly exercised thereby, and in the end the rewards of righteousness; and therefore he says we should be "patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer" for that grace which is promised according to our needs.

He thought of the poverty and losses of some and therefore counselled sympathy and hospitality—"Distributing to the necessity of saints, given to hospitality. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Bless [even] them which persecute you; bless and curse not. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men."

He thought of the numerous vexations arising from contact with those of undisciplined hearts and said, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all them. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. [You will thus make him ashamed of his own conduct in contrast with yours.]"

Finally, he says, "Be not overcome of evil [do not allow the trials of life to make you sour, or vindictive, or cold and unsympathetic; nor allow the more favorable circumstances to make you proud or high minded or wise in your own conceits]; but overcome evil [of every kind] with good."

Then he instructs us to be law-abiding and God-honoring citizens in the communities in which we live—"Rendering to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to

whom custom; fear [respectful deference or submission] to whom fear; honor to whom honor." And after pointing to the several commandments of the moral law he adds, "If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love, worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

Yes, love; supreme love to God and then to the neighbor as to self, is that disposition of heart that will make us victorious in every trial and temptation. In its operations toward God it lays hold by faith upon his mighty power; it trusts his wisdom and his guidance; it takes his standpoint of observation and patiently waits the outworking of his deep designs, rejoicing in hope; and is persevering and faithful through all the painful processes that lead on to victory. In its operations toward our fellow-men it is pure, peaceable, kind, forbearing, gentle, sympathetic, tender, and in strict conformity to the golden rule.

"Do this," says the Apostle—cultivate this God-like disposition of love. And not only so, but he would have us be diligent in the cultivation, "knowing the season," knowing that the time is short in which to build up in ourselves this God-like and Christ-like character. We have not a moment to lose if we desire to be finally approved of God as meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

If the Apostle could say to the saints of his day, "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep," etc., because they had then entered upon the Gospel age with its privilege of running the race for the prize of our high calling, with how much greater force do his words apply to these closing days of the age. In the clear light of unfolded time-prophecy we see that we are now living in the latter half of the harvest period; that only eight years of the harvest time remain, and that before its close all the overcoming saints will have passed the veil of the flesh and entered into the joy of the Lord as co-workers with him in the great work of the kingdom. Yes, "the night is far spent" and "the day [the glorious Millennial day] is at hand." Even now the gray streaks of dawn appear. It is the day when the kingly Bridegroom shall receive unto himself his ready and waiting bride, and the time is short in which to make ready for our gathering together unto him. It is high time indeed to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation, our glorious deliverance, very near.

It is possible that some, even of the very dear and fully consecrated children of God, surrounded by the cares of this life, or weary in the struggle against sin and evil, or somewhat beguiled by the present things of time and sense, may have become more or less drowsy, and so stand in special need of the stirring exhortation, "it is now high time to awake out of sleep." It is a time for earnest, searching self-examination, for a more diligent feeling after God, for a closer walk and more intimate fellowship with him, for more thorough self-abnegation, more diligent and persevering cross-bearing, and more faithful conformity in every respect to the whole will of God concerning us.

The Apostle says, "Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light;" and again, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." A careful, prayerful searching of our hearts will make plain wherein we lack of conformity to the perfect will of God. And if we discover in us any perverse way we will want to correct it and the more fully to put on the armor of light—the armor of righteousness and truth. Thus we put on the Lord Jesus Christ—the mind or disposition of Christ, that spirit of love which Paul says "is the fulfilling of the law"—that love that worketh no ill to its neighbor; that suffereth long and is kind, that envieth not, that vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, that rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; and without which, though

we speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have it not, we are only as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal; and though we have the gift of prophecy (teaching) and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though we have all faith so that we could remove mountains, and though we bestow all our goods to feed the poor, and even give our bodies to be burned, it profiteth nothing.—1 Cor. 13:1-7.

How important, then, in the short time that remains to us here, that we awake fully and apply ourselves most diligently to the cultivation of this God-like and Christ-like disposition of love. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love . . . and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."—1 John 4:7, 8, 16.

THE GREAT TEACHER'S TABLE-TALKS

Luke 14:1-14.—JULY 29.

Golden Text—"He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

The Sabbath was quite a feast day amongst the Jews, but in accordance with the requirements of the law the dishes were served cold—cooked previously. Our Lord evidently made no objection to these Sabbath feasts, since we find that on several occasions he participated in them. The feast at Bethany just before his crucifixion was on the Sabbath, and likewise the one referred to in the present lesson. The invitation was from a prominent Pharisee, one of the rulers. It evidently included our Lord's disciples as well as himself, and numerous of the host's prominent friends, Pharisees and Doctors of the Law.

The fame of Jesus had spread considerably, and doubtless these men were interested in thus coming in close contact with him, with a view to judging according to their own standards respecting his character, teachings and miracles—whether or not he was a fanatic, whether or not he made great boasts of himself, why the common people seemed so attracted to him, and why he did not seem to specially seek the fellowship of the rich and influential—although, so far as we know, he never refused an invitation to a feast, always using such occasions as opportunities for the presentation of the truth, to glorify the Father in heaven, to help, to instruct, to benefit those with whom he was in contact.

The guests watched him critically rather than sympathetically. They were looking for faults rather than for virtues. But as with others, so with these—they found no fault in him. Perhaps by accident, perhaps by design, there was in the company a man who had the dropsy. He may have been a member of the household or family; indeed our Lord possibly may have been invited there with a view to proposing the healing of this one with the infirmity.

Our Lord seems to have had a special feeling of sympathy with the afflicted, and he quickly noticed the man with the dropsy. The Pharisees were no doubt interested in witnessing the miracle, as any others would be; and at the same time, according to their forms, such a miracle on the Sabbath day would have been a misdemeanor. Our Lord's interest in handling the situation is apparent. He first inquired of his host and his learned associates whether or not it was lawful to heal the sick on the Sabbath day. The Doctors of the Law were expected to be able and willing to answer such questions propounded by the people at any time; yet in the presence of the great Teacher they all held their peace, made no reply; they wanted to see what course he would take. They did not wish to interrupt him—perhaps they wished to have an opportunity to find fault with him on this account. No objection to healing on the Sabbath day having been cited from the Law, our Lord performed the miracle—"He took him and healed him and let him go." The implication is that in some manner our Lord touched the afflicted one, that thus it might be the more manifest that the miracle was of divine power through him.

THEY WOULD ASSIST DUMB BRUTES

After having answered his own question by the miracle, thus attesting that nothing in the Law forbade the healing of the sick on the Sabbath, our Lord justified his course before the company saying, "Which of you having an ass or an ox fall into a pit would not draw him out on the Sabbath?" Another reading is, "Which of you having a son or even an ox fall into a pit would not on the Sabbath draw him out?" The proposition was unanswerable. They all knew that, where their selfish interests were involved, they would decide that there was nothing in the Law to hinder lending assistance on the Sabbath. Thus our Lord clearly showed that their thought

respecting the healing of humanity on the Sabbath was fallacious, unscriptural.

It will be remembered that our Lord was still under the terms of the Law Covenant, bound by every provision of the law just as much as every other Jew had been from the time the law was given at Mount Sinai. The Law Covenant did not pass away, as the Apostle points out, until Christ "nailed it to the cross." (Col. 2:14.) Hence nothing that our Lord did on the Sabbath day, healing the sick, etc., could properly be esteemed a violation of the fourth commandment, or any other feature of the law.

We have already shown (DAWN STUDIES, Vol. VI., chap. VII.) that the Law Covenant sealed at Sinai was not in force before that time upon the Jews, that it was not given to any other people, and that so far as those who accepted Christ were, and are concerned the Law Covenant ended at the cross. Hence all the obligations of the Jewish Sabbath ended there also. The followers of Jesus during this Gospel age keep the higher Sabbath, the antitypical Sabbath, the "rest of the people of God"—rest from their own works, rest from fear, rest in hope of the glorious things which God has provided through Jesus for all who love him, rest in hope also for the world, that in due time all shall come to a knowledge of the Lord. This perpetual rest of peace abides with us every day alike.

"NO LONGER SERVANTS, BUT SONS"

Our celebration of the first day of the week as a Christian Sabbath should not be with the thought that it is a law or bondage, but rather an appreciation of the great privilege we enjoy of leaving the ordinary affairs of life on that day to give special thought to the spiritual things of the new creature and to fellowship one with another, commemorating the day also as the one on which our Lord arose from the dead and began the work of the New Creation. We are looking forward also to the glorious rest that remaineth for the people of God, the eternity of blessed perfection into which we hope to be ushered by a resurrection from the dead, when we shall awake in our Lord's likeness. During this Gospel age our heavenly Father addresses us not as a house of servants but as a house of sons—as new creatures in Christ Jesus. It would not be appropriate for him to give to these new creatures, begotten of his Spirit, such laws as he gave to the Jews, the house of servants.

The Lord would not insult the new creature by even suggesting the various things stipulated in the Ten Commandments. The new creatures in Christ Jesus have no sympathy with profanity, idol worship, the unrest of disbelief, with dishonor to parents, with murder and adultery, false witness, covetousness. Those whose hearts run in these directions have not been begotten of the Spirit have not the Spirit of Christ, are none of his. The Lord's command to those who are new creatures in Christ Jesus is that, being begotten of the spirit of love, they shall grow in grace and in knowledge and in love, seeking daily to bring into subjection all the weaknesses of their mortal bodies, reckoned dead at the moment they were begotten of the Spirit. True, the apostles do urge upon the Lord's people to *put away anger and malice and envy and strife, etc.*, works of the flesh and of the devil; but even then they address the New Creature, not as though it were in sympathy with these wrong doings, but on the contrary, urging the New Creature to put away, to mortify, to put to death, these deeds of their flesh already *reckoned dead*.

Our Father's dealings and commands are never to the flesh, but to the new creatures. From this standpoint, "Ye

are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of Christ dwell in you." (Rom. 8:9.) Therefore, "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now, henceforth, know we him [so] no more." (2 Cor. 5:16.) We are "judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." (1 Pet. 4:6.) We are reckoned as fulfilling the highest demands of the divine law to God and to man, because we are not walking after the flesh but after the Spirit.

THE HUMBLE TO BE EXALTED

It was probably in answer to some question that our Lord propounded the parable of the guests bidden to a marriage feast, warning against the custom of seeking prominent positions, and the danger incurred that a more honorable person might come in later, and thus they might get the least honorable seat in the company. Our Lord noted this mark of selfishness in those who were gathered with him at the table of his host, but we must suppose that he did not rudely intrude the matter as a reproof at such a time without having a question or some reasonable cause for bringing the matter forward.

The entire lesson of the parable seems to be an illustration of the proper course amongst men as viewed from the divine standpoint, and hence an illustration to all of the way in which God will deal with those whom he invites to the antitypical marriage-feast. The chief places will not be given to those most bold, most inclined to usurp authority; but, on the contrary, the Lord will not forget the man or woman of humble mind who, thinking little of himself or herself, would thankfully and gratefully seek for and appreciate the very humblest place in the divine presence.

Ambition is a very necessary faculty of the human mind, without which the world would make comparatively little progress; but it is a very dangerous element as respects the formation of Christian character. We may be sure, from all the Scriptures set forth, that God's principle of dealing with us in the distribution of the glories and honors of the kingdom will be along the lines laid down by the Master: he that humbleth himself shall be exalted, he that exalteth himself shall be abased.

LOVE OF POWER TO DO GOOD

We are frequently charged by those who, from blindness or other reasons, would disparage the glorious Gospel of the kingdom, that those "of this way" are seeking selfishly for the glory and honor and immortality of the kingdom as something superior to what others will receive at the Lord's hand. This as a whole is an unfair and an unjust charge, for as far as we know the majority of those who are interested in "present truth" are not so much ambitious for the dignities of the kingdom as they are for any place in that great marriage feast, any membership in the glorious Bride company, any opportunity to share with the heavenly Bridegroom in the great and wonderful work of blessing all the families of the earth. It would not occur to any of us to think of ourselves in connection with such high honors and dignities, glory and immortality, except as we find it plainly stated in the divine Word, but finding it there, it is the duty of faith to accept whatever we may be deemed worthy of, and to allow it to work in us to will and to do the Lord's good pleasure, as he intended.

The chief difficulty, so far as our experience goes, is not a mere ambition as respects glory, honor and rank in the kingdom, but rather an ambition as respects the present life—a seeking who shall be greatest on this side the veil. Our observation is that some of the most talented, most able, most conscientious of the Lord's followers are in danger along this line, and it is a part of our duty to call this matter to the general attention, that each of the Lord's dear people may do all in his power to help any who are in such a position to see that an ambitious striving for glory and honor and dignity and position in the present time would surely mean a loss of the Lord's favor and the ultimate attainment in the kingdom of a much humbler position, if indeed pride did not hinder them entirely from being accepted as members of the "little flock." Let us remember the Apostle's exhortation, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."—1 Pet. 5:6.

REMEMBER THE POOR AND THE FRIENDLESS

Perhaps it was in answer to some other question that our Lord gave his dissertation respecting the making of a feast and who should be invited to it, the conclusion of our lesson. He set forth a new proposition: The custom was to invite to a feast those whom you would expect and

desire to ask you in return to a feast at their home. The thought of recompense was thus associated, a selfish thought. But our Lord's suggestion would not necessarily, we think, mean that it would be wrong to invite a person to a feast at our homes if we thought it at all probable he would ask us to his home. His thought rather is that, while this would be a pleasant and profitable interchange, there would be no merit in so doing in the Lord's sight—each would get his reward in such a reciprocity.

Perhaps the Lord wished to show his host that in inviting himself and his disciples, who were not so situated as to be able to invite the others of the company in turn to their homes, he had really done a gracious act, provided he had the gracious motive back of it. In making a feast for the poor, the helpless, the maimed and the blind, a work of charity and mercy would be done, and, no recompense coming in the present life, they might be sure of a blessing in the future life. In other words, our Lord intimates that every good deed willingly, intelligently done from the right motive, may be sure to have a blessing, as surely as will every evil deed, every injurious matter done with a wrong thought and evil sentiment, be sure to have some kind of punishment either in the present or in the future life.

Our Lord declared that such a good deed will be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, but since he was not addressing his disciples, not addressing justified ones, we feel that his words should not be understood to mean that such a feast to the poor, etc., would secure the highest place in the first resurrection among the blessed and holy who shall be kings and priests unto God and reign as the king's class, the bride class, with the Bridegroom. This would not be a reasonable view to put upon the words, because other Scriptures intimate that not only faith in Jesus as the Mediator is necessary, but a traveling faithfully in the narrow way in order to attain a share in the first resurrection.

What then did our Lord mean? We answer that the first resurrection, which will include only the "blessed and holy," the saints, the bride of Christ, the bride with the glorious Head and Bridegroom, will mark the beginning of the kingdom which our Lord preached and which he taught us to pray for, saying, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven." Those who will have part in the first resurrection are to be the kings and priests and judges of the world. (1 Cor. 6:2; Rev. 20:6.) Surely after that first resurrection the blessing of the world, the times of restitution of all things, will begin! Then the whole world will stand before these judges during the thousand years to be helped up, if they will, to the full of human perfection, or, failing to respond to their glorious opportunities, they will be destroyed in the second death.

In that day of their judgment every deed of kindness to the poor will be found to have wrought some blessing in the character of the individual which will have to do with his station, with his starting-point on the highway of holiness. The most degraded, those who have accomplished nothing in the present time in the way of character development, must begin at the very start of the road and have the longer journey to its farther end of perfection; while those who in the present time have loved righteousness and hated iniquity, and have sought to comfort and benefit their fellows, especially those who would give even a cup of cold water to a disciple of the Lord because he was his disciple—all such would be found to be benefited proportionately in that day of glorious possibilities. Thus the Lord's words would signify that any who would give a cup of cold water or who would bless the maimed and the blind and the poor would experience a reward and blessing in that future time which would follow the resurrection of the just—in the Millennial age.

VALUE OF TABLE-TALKS

The example set by our Lord in the matter of table-talks we have followed for many years at the Bible House with great profit. We find that much advantage accrues from the observance of order and regularity. Every morning promptly at 7 o'clock we have praise and prayer (Sunday 8 A. M.). Then we gather at the table, and after giving thanks for the food and praying that a blessing may be derived from our fellowship together, one of our number reads the text for the day from the Heavenly Manna. Questions are called for as breakfast proceeds and the text is thoroughly discussed. Later, before leaving the table, the comment following the text in the Manna is read as a conclusion of the lesson. Our dinner and supper-table talks are upon whatever questions may suggest themselves to any of those present, with opportunities for general expression—

the brethren being asked for an expression, then the opportunity thrown open to anybody. The one occupying the head of the table is expected to give the final answer to the question. These table-talks are a schooling of themselves, ranging as they do on all parts of the Word of God, and refresh the memories of those present respecting what they have previously learned. We commend this method to all the dear people of God. Food partaken of under such

circumstances seems to do one more good than otherwise, and the spiritual refreshment is almost certain to be advantageous. We do not favor disputings or replies of one to another, but merely the statement by each one of them of his own understanding of the question or the Scripture involved. Our minds cannot help being active, and it is profitable to us to have them directed into useful channels. Anyway, the example set by our Lord is surely a good one.

THE SLIGHTED INVITATION

Luke 14:15-24.—AUGUST 5.

Golden Text—"They all with one consent began to make excuse."

This lesson is a continuation of our Lord's table-talk at the home of the Pharisee. He had given suggestions along the line of humility on the part of guests, then to entertainers as to how their hospitality might wisely be dispensed: following this came a remark from one of the guests, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." This was doubtless uttered in a reverent spirit, possibly by one of the apostles, with a view to turning the attention of the company to the message which the Master and his disciples were proclaiming—the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The Jews for over sixteen centuries had been waiting for the kingdom of Messiah, which God's promise to Abraham indicated should come in connection with his seed—Israel. Moses, their mediator and lawgiver, had declared that Messiah would be like unto himself as a leader for the nation, but greater. Through the prophets, all the way down through Israel's history, God had told his chosen nation of the great blessings in store for them. The grandeur of the Millennial kingdom had been portrayed, and the wonderful opportunity for divine favor and refreshment had been pictured, with the assurance that it should extend from Israel to all the families of the world. In a vague manner the Jews had looked forward to this kingdom with a mixture of hope and pride, combined with a fear that the changed conditions might in some particulars put any restraint upon their liberties as respects sins, etc. The reference to eating bread in the kingdom, viewed from the oriental standpoint, would signify to be on good terms with the King, and a new regime, and to be a participator in the blessings of that glorious epoch.

PARABLE OF THE GREAT SUPPER

Our Lord was quick to turn the remark so as to point out a valuable lesson to all present who had the hearing ear. He gave, especially for the benefit of his disciples, but incidentally for the benefit of others of the company who were entertaining him, a lesson showing how those who might have been expected to appreciate God's favors would fail to do so, because of lack of faith and because too closely wedded to the affairs and interests of this present evil world. He likened God's kingdom blessings to a great feast. This is a common illustration throughout the Scriptures—a feast of fat things with wines well refined, is the Prophet Isaiah's description of the Millennial blessings and glories which the Lord has in reservation for the world of mankind. The Prophet declares that the Lord will in this mountain spread a feast. (Isa. 25:6.) The mountain is the kingdom, the dominion of Christ when it shall be set up, his Church being glorified with him in power, and blessings of very rich and choice kind will be set forth for the whole world of mankind.

The Jews usually ate two meals in a day: the first might be termed breakfast, and was usually very simple, very plain—bread, olives, milk, etc.; the second and principal meal of the day was called sometimes dinner and sometimes supper, and consisted of more elaborate dishes, according to the ability of each family. The great feasts were usually made about sundown. Our Lord's parable pictures such a great feast, for it speaks of oxen and fatlings being killed, which implies hundreds of guests. In these great feasts it was customary to send out the notifications long in advance, without specifying exactly the time, which would depend upon contingent circumstances. On the day of the feast, when it was assured that there would be no miscarriage of the arrangements, servants were sent to those already notified or bidden that they might come promptly to the feast.

Our Lord represents the host of his parable as getting ready the supper on a grand scale, and then sending word to the previously bidden ones to come. Contrary to all precedent these guests declined, literally "begged off," asked to be excused, did not appreciate the honor done them, and sought for one or another excuse to avoid going to the feast.

Such great feasts were made by princes or very wealthy men, and it was considered a high honor to have an invitation and to attend. Our Lord purposely made the parable the very contrary to the custom. One excuse was that the invited guest had recently purchased property and must examine it; another had purchased five yoke of oxen and needed to inspect them, test them; another had married a wife, etc. When the servant returned and reported that the bidden guests had declined to come the host was indignant, as he had every right to be. It was indeed a shameful procedure from any standpoint to accept an invitation, to allow the host to expect the invited one and to make elaborate preparations, and then at the final moment for the latter to make some trivial excuse.

"THEY THAT WERE BIDDEN"

As the parable refers to Jehovah's invitation to the blessings of the kingdom, so those in the parable who originally were bidden, but who began to make excuse, were the Jews. To them God had given notice respecting the coming feast. They as a nation had declared that they would be very glad indeed to accept the high honor which he had conferred upon them in bidding them first to the special favors and privileges of the kingdom. The feast had been in preparation for more than eighteen centuries from its first announcement. Our Lord with the apostles was the servant of Jehovah to inform his chosen people that all things were now ready, to come in prepared condition of heart to enter into the kingdom, to enjoy its bounteous feast of rich blessings in their own hearts and lives, to be changed, begotten of the Spirit, that they might become new creatures and heirs of God and joint-heirs with Messiah in that kingdom. What a wonderful offer! How we should have expected that the whole people of Israel would have joyously hailed the message, and cried Hosanna to God in the highest! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah—the Messiah.

But no! the guests on the contrary looked at the servant and said, "We do not believe that this will be so grand a feast as we had supposed. The servant looks so meek, so gentle, so lowly of heart, that we feel it indicates that the feast will be a very tame affair; and now, separated as we are, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, we do not believe that we would very much enjoy the feast. We will not say this in so many words, we will preserve an outward form of godliness, and instead of confessing the truth on the subject we will merely make excuses to ourselves or to the servant of being too busy, etc. We will send our regrets instead of attending, although really we have no regrets. Indeed we feel that we will be happier pursuing our usual course of selfish ambition rather than get too close to the Lord, to his supervision, and the rules of righteousness which must certainly obtain in connection with those whom he would honor."

The parable represents that the entire company of those who were bidden refused—failed to hearken to the servant or to come to the feast. Those who did receive our Lord and his message were so few, as compared with the entire Jewish nation, as to leave them almost unworthy of being mentioned, but, additionally, those who received Jesus were in large proportion the publicans and sinners, who in their day were considered rather as moral and social outcasts, and not at all recognized as the ones eligible to the kingdom which God had promised to the holy. The Scribes and Pharisees counted themselves the holy people, and claimed for themselves the blessings, the invitation to the feast. Practically none of these received the Lord or came to the feast.

The host who had made so great provision for the Jewish nation, "was angry"—not mad, not in a rage, but indignant, and with perfect propriety he decided that "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." The supper of this parable, therefore, is not the only supper mentioned in the Scriptures, is not the supper men-

tioned by the Prophet Isaiah, which would be a feast of fat things for all nations. Because other Scriptures clearly show us that when that secondary feast for all nations shall be spread, Israel will have the first opportunity of participating in it. (Rom. 11:25-32.) The feast here spoken of is evidently the marriage feast of another parable. Its blessings are not the general favors and mercies that are coming to the world by and by, but the special blessings and favors of God which, in the beginning of the Millennial age, will be bestowed upon the glorified Christ, our Lord, the Head, and the church his body, the bride.

Natural Israel had the first opportunity for attaining the spiritual blessings to which spiritual Israel now aspires. The Apostle explains this in Rom. 11:7-26, where he pictures the favored ones of God as an olive-tree, and informs us that the branches of that olive-tree at the Lord's first advent represented the Israelites, and that nearly all of these branches were broken off because of unbelief, because of failure to accept the invitation to the feast, because of a lack of appreciation of the spiritual blessings to be bestowed because of lack of faith. The Apostle tells us that God has accepted the believers in Christ of every nation, and that these are by faith engrafted into the olive-tree to take the place of the natural branches, the Jews broken off from relationship to this blessing through unbelief.

THE MAIMED AND HALT GATHERED

As the Scribes and Pharisees, the more devout of the Jewish nation, constituted the class to whom the kingdom was primarily offered, so the class whom they rejected, the publicans and sinners, constituted the class described in this part of the parable as the poor, the halt, the maimed and the blind. When the better educated, the less morally lame, the less spiritually blind, rejected our Lord and his message respecting the kingdom, he at once began to seek out the publicans and sinners, and to these his teachings were chiefly directed—they were invited to come to the feast which their more educated, more outwardly religious and pious brethren of the Scribes and Pharisees did not appreciate. But the servant could not find enough of this class to furnish the feast with guests according to the original arrangement of the host. The explanation of this part of the parable is that God, knowing the end from the beginning, had determined a definite number to constitute the church, the bride class, to be joint-heirs with his son in the bounties and blessings of the kingdom, represented by this great feast.

We understand the Scriptures to teach that this elect number is 144,000. Jesus and his disciples, as the servants of Jehovah, gathered as many of these poor, halt, lame Jews as were willing to come to the feast. About 500 accepted the invitation in our Lord's time and several thousand more at Pentecost, under the ministration of the Spirit, while several thousand more responded to the same glorious message further on, and ultimately the message reached those of every country. But in all we are assured that only a remnant of Israel was found worthy of the kingdom honors. How many in all we could only guess, but we see no reason for placing the estimate higher than ten thousand. Even if some one would estimate that double this number more or less accepted of Christ, we should think it strange, as compared with present conditions, if more than ten thousand became footstep followers of our Lord Jesus in the narrow way of self-sacrifice even unto death, through which narrow way only can any attain to this great feast.

"GO YE INTO THE HIGHWAYS AND HEDGES"

Suppose that a remnant of ten thousand Jews did accept the divine favor in the very spirit of it, this would leave 134,000 short of the furnishing of the feast with the predetermined number of guests. Would the householder abandon his original arrangement? Nay: he determined that the full complement of guests should be there, as this parable shows, and hence the servants were found outside that city, the Jewish nation, to which belonged the promised divine favor. Those servants were sent into the byways and hedges, into various parts of the world, to find guests for this great feast. They were bidden to urge all that they met, up to a certain number, to come to the feast. As the Lord of the feast had prescribed the number of his guests, they were not to cease inviting until the full complement had been found, nor were they to invite any more than the fixed number. This part of the message has been going out to the Gentiles ever since Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, heard of the blessed opening of this door of opportunity to the Gentiles.

Throughout the Gospel age the Lord has directed his servants and guided in the work, so that at no time would

more than the elect number be even invited. This accounts to us for much of the opposition and persecution which the Lord has permitted to come from time to time upon his servants and upon those who are willing to accept his invitation. He not only wishes to have guests at his feast, joint-heirs with Christ in the kingdom, but elsewhere he has shown that he has predetermined that these only are the ones he will accept as copies of his Son. This signifies, then, that those who hear this invitation and are inclined to respond favorably will be tested by opposition and persecution, which in various ways will test and prove them and discourage and hinder any who are not of the stamp, the character, which our Lord has predetermined will be satisfactory to himself. He assures us that faith and zeal are amongst the characteristics necessary, and he has provided for the covering of every blemish and defect where these acceptable characteristics are found.

"VIRGINS HER COMPANIONS"

To our understanding other Scriptures show that many more than the 144,000 have accepted Christ and have made a consecration, agreeing to follow the great servant of God to the feast. Many of these, a "great company," although following in a measure, and in that measure satisfactory to the Lord, are not up to the divine standard of love and zeal. Nevertheless, since they exercised a sufficiency of faith to leave the world behind with a view to accepting God's favors, he will not permit them to suffer loss, but will give them also a share in the feast, though not in the chief seats of honor and distinction with the heavenly Bridegroom and the 144,000 constituting the bride. The "more than conquerors," we are assured, shall in this feast sit with our Lord in his throne and share his glory, honor and immortality; but to the great company, after a certain purifying and washing, tribulation, there will be granted the honor of association, not in the throne but before the throne, not wearing crowns but bearing palms, not constituting pillars and living stones in the Temple but doing service in the Temple in humbler positions. All of these are represented in Revelation 7, and again in Revelation 19 we have the intimation that although this feast is specifically the nuptial feast of Christ and the church, nevertheless the "great company," (Rev. 7) the virgins, the bride's companions, will be invited to share in this nuptial feast—"Blessed are they that are invited to the marriage-supper of the Lamb."—Rev. 19:9; Psalms 45:14, 15.

It will be later on that the feast of fat things for the world will be spread out, and the intervening time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation shall so plow up the fallow ground of the human heart that the masses of mankind will indeed be ready to hail the blessings of that day. And hence we read of it that there the Desire of all Nations shall come. The bread of life will be provided to whosoever will accept it, the water of life to all who are thirsty, the Spirit and the bride shall say, Come, and whosoever will may come and partake freely.

How wonderfully grand and broad are the divine provisions, the feast which God has prepared! What a grand privilege we enjoy in that our ears already have heard of this special feast, to which the invitations have been going forth throughout this Gospel age—this nuptial feast by which we all will celebrate our union forever with the heavenly Bridegroom in the glorious estate of the kingdom which is to bless the world. Let us not be like those of the parable who disesteemed the offer. Let us, on the contrary, following the example of the Apostle and his exhortation, lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us—one weakness or difficulty in one person, another weakness or difficulty in another—and let us run with patience the race set before us.

Let us be so enthused with the glorious possibilities of this great feast that we will not be content to walk or to meander slowly, toying with the affairs of this world or the flowers or attractions beside the way, which would lure us from the way, but let us press along. The way is rugged, and has been purposely so arranged by the Lord that only the zealous, the earnest, the faithful, the loyal, will be able to attain to the prize. Let us not be discouraged either, as though it were an impossibility to attain the blessing to which we have been called. The fact that the Lord has called us implies that he has made it possible for us to attain, and this possibility we see centers in our dear Redeemer: not merely in the work which he accomplished for us in the past when he redeemed us, but also in his gracious assistances which he renders us all along the journey. Let us remember his assurance that he is able and willing to make all things work together for good to them that love him, to the called ones according to his purpose.

THE BLESSING OF THORNS

When we thank our heavenly Father
For the blessings of each day;
For the flowers that are strewn
O'er the roughness of the way;
When we thank him for the roses
That we gather day by day,
Do we ever see the blessing
Of the thorns along life's way?

Of we thank him for the sunshine
That he sends us from above;
Do we ever in the shadow
Recognize his tender love?
When our feet grow worn and weary,
And our crosses hard to bear;
Of the way seems long and dreary,
Knowing not his tender care.

When the clouds that round us darken
Change to night our radiant day,
Of we murmur that the sunshine
Has been hidden from our way.
But our Father in his wisdom
Sends the dark as well as light;
Can we doubt his loving kindness,
In whose keeping all is right?

If no shadow veiled our pathway,
And we knew no ill to fear,
Would we cling so closely to him?
Would our Father seem so near?
As when darkness gathers round us,
And our faith in self is lost,
We but trust him, and the Savior
Gives us strength to bear our cross.

In our path if all were sunshine,
Would we look to him for light?
And if all below were brightness,
Then would heaven seem so bright?
When we meet beyond the shadows,
In that land of endless day,
We will thank our heavenly Father
For the darkness of the way.

Of we cannot see his kindness
Through the darkness, pain and loss;
But we know the crown is dearer
For the sharpness of the cross.
And when in his throne we gather,
And our dear Redeemer meet,
We will thank our heavenly Father
For the thorns that pierced our feet.

EUGENIA M. DOYLE.

THE FATHER OF MERCIES

Luke 15:11-32.—AUGUST 12.

Golden Text—"Return unto me and I will return unto you, saith the Lord."—Mal. 3:7.

The parable of the prodigal son is one of three teaching the same general lesson: God's love and sympathy toward the poor and fallen and degraded and lost. These three parables were spoken to the Pharisees and Doctors of the Law, who, while admiring the Lord Jesus, were indignant with him because he did not, like themselves, spurn the lower classes, the publicans and sinners.

In one of the associated parables the word-picture is that of a shepherd with an hundred sheep, one of which goes astray: the shepherd leaves the ninety and nine to follow the straying sheep, and, recovering it, rejoices greatly, more than over the ninety and nine which went not astray. The picture here seems to represent God's entire creation as his flock, the one sheep which went astray seeming to portray Adam and his race lost in sin. The pursuing of the lost sheep was the heavenly Father sending his Son to redeem Adam and his race, to bring back all or so many as are willing to come back to the fold—to fellowship with God and the enjoyment of his favor, everlasting life. This picture was one which would appeal to the people of that country, many of whom were shepherds or acquainted with the customs of shepherds. It presented the heavenly Father in a new light, as interested in the straying ones with a love that is in no sense selfish, but sacrificing.

The other associated parable was that of the lost piece of silver. The women of those times usually wore a bracelet on which was fastened ten coins. Such a bracelet was generally the gift of the bridegroom at the time of marriage, and the bracelet and each piece associated with it was highly esteemed by its wearer. The parable pictures the loss of one of these pieces, and shows the diligence with which a woman would search and sweep to find it because it was valuable in her eyes, and how she would rejoice at the finding. Our Lord's comment on this is that much more would the heavenly Father have an interest in humanity in its lost condition, and search for and rejoice in finding the lost. Both of these parables bore specially upon the attitude of the Pharisees toward the masses of the people—the common people, including the publicans and sinners. These parables showed that their attitude was not the proper one.

PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

Then follows the parable of today's lesson. A father has two sons. It was the custom of that time and country that the elder son should inherit the principal part of the estate if he chose to remain at home with his father. The younger sons were usually given some portion, and allowed to embark if they would in some other business or profession. The parable opens with the proposition of the younger son that he would leave home, taking with him whatever the father was willing to give him. His request was granted; the father gave a portion of his means to each of the sons. We do not understand the parable to teach that the father unwisely retained nothing to himself, but contrariwise—that he merely gave a reasonable individual portion to each

son, retaining the remainder, which, however, was intended for the elder son, if faithful, at the father's death. Incidentally we remark that experience shows that it would be unwise for a father to take any other course than the one here suggested. A man's estate is his stewardship from the Lord, and while children may be properly recognized in this stewardship, the responsibility of a Christian man's consecration should extend beyond his own immediate offspring while including them.

Rehearsing the story briefly: the younger son used his father's gifts riotously, wastefully, and soon came to want in a foreign land. In his degradation he became a swineherd, an especially demeaning occupation amongst the Jews at that time. He got down to the level of the swine in many respects, and yet felt a longing for better things that he had known before. He was not satisfied, and determined to return to his father and to seek to be a servant in the household, claiming nothing further as a son, realizing that he had dishonored the relationship. The loving father is pictured as seeing the prodigal a long way off and hastening to him, embracing him and kissing him repeatedly. The prodigal attempts to make his statement of contrition, but is interrupted by the father's expressions of love and directions for the best robe, the ring, the feast of fatted calf, and general rejoicing that the dead had come to life, the lost had been found, the wayward had returned.

The parable shows the elder son offended, refusing to enter into the joys of the occasion, and complaining that his loyalty to his father had less demonstration than was given to the return of the prodigal. The father urges the elder son to come and rejoice also, to enter into his spirit in the matter, assuring him that this meant no less love for himself, and points to the fact that as the loyal son he may still be the heir of all his possessions, "All that I have is thine"—is for thee.

THE PROPER INTERPRETATION

No interpretation of the parable is given, but it might be explained in harmony with itself and in harmony with other Scriptures in two ways:

(1) We might interpret it as we have done the parable of the hundred sheep, that the elder brother represented those who had always been in harmony with God, the holy angels; that the younger brother was mankind, etc.

(2) Another interpretation seems much more appropriate and fitting. The elder brother well represents the Pharisees and Doctors of the Law, who outwardly and theoretically were in harmony with God. Paul, who had been one of this class, declares that with all good conscience he had served the God of his fathers as a Pharisee. Doubtless there were others of the class whose intentions and desires were to remain loyal and obedient to the Heavenly Father—who sought daily by obedience to the law to remain at home with God, and who did remain at home up to the time that our Lord addressed them this parable. They had their

good portion of this present life, as well as the promise of the great Oath-Bound Covenant in the future.

The younger son would represent that portion of the nation of Israel which, while aware of the Oath-Bound Covenant and of the blessings and privileges of relationship with God, had nevertheless wandered off into the ways of sin as publicans and sinners and careless ones. These realized in large measure their own unworthiness, and sometimes smote upon their breasts saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." These were all repudiated by the Pharisees and Doctors of the Law, who declared them to be in no sense of the word participants in the promises, regarded them as prodigals, sinners, and would not eat with them nor salute them nor have any dealings with them. Our Lord, on the contrary, respecting the Father, was willing to speak to these, willing to receive them, told them of the Father's love, of his provision to give them the robe of Christ's righteousness, justification; of his willingness to make them participants in the great feast of fat things, the kingdom blessings; of his willingness to give them the ring as a signet of his everlasting mercy, forgiveness and love, the Pentecostal blessing.

The Pharisees, etc., as the elder son, noting this divine favor to the poor common people, the publicans and sinners, were angry. They rejected the message of the Father through the Son, they would not go to the same feast. They thus showed that they lacked a very important quality of heart—they lacked the spirit of loving kindness, and hence were not at all prepared for the feast. They left the Father's house, left their share in the Oath-Bound Covenant and the wonderful favors connected therewith, because they had not the Father's spirit, because they lacked the spirit of brotherly kindness, love. The Lord as a result cast them off as a nation, and they lost the privilege of the chief blessing and were blinded.

Although the heavenly Father has temporarily discarded the nation represented by this elder brother, nevertheless amongst those with whom he is now dealing (spiritual Israel) there are similar classes—some who are self-righteous and self-confident, moral and religious, but who, like the Pharisees, have not a sufficiency of the spirit of love to appreciate the Father's conduct and to abide in his love. On the other hand there is still the Lazarus class, still the returned prodigal class, to which the Father is pleased to grant riches of grace and mercy and truth, the robe of righteousness, the feast of fat things and the ring, symbolizing his eternal love and mercy.

The lesson for us all is that even after we have been favored of the heavenly Father, been accepted as his children, there are two ways of departing from him. One way is that of open sin and wantonness, the other a failure to attain to the divine likeness in our hearts. The parable seems to imply that there is more hope of those who have gone into sin and degradation returning to God, being ac-

cepted of him and received into his blessings and becoming inheritors of his future favors, than there is of some who, while outwardly moral and religious, fail to acquire the Lord's spirit of love and mercy. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his;" and being none of his he will surely not be permitted to share in the fruits and graces of the spirit of the present time, love, joy, peace, etc., nor in the exceeding great and precious things of the divine provision which are yet future—glory, honor and immortality.

OUR GOLDEN TEXT

The thought everywhere held out in the Scriptures is that God's mercy endures forever—that is, "olam," or to a completion. A small portion of the world of mankind at the present time has received God's favor to the extent of being justified and made participators in the divine favors and mercies of this present time. As in his dealings with these the Lord is very gracious, so is he to those who return from the ways of sin, and he is even patient with those who lack the spirit of love and forgiveness, and comes to them entreating them to join in his gracious plans and arrangements. This loving kindness bestowed upon the believers of the present time illustrates the Spirit of the Lord. It becomes an assurance to us of the fulfilment of his promise that in due time all the families of the earth shall be brought to a knowledge of his goodness, to an opportunity for knowing him whom to rightly know and appreciate will mean to them everlasting life.

It is not in violation of the Lord's declaration of mercy that we find the Scriptures clearly teaching that when mercy shall have fully accomplished its work, when it shall have accomplished all it can accomplish in the interest of the fallen and the sinful, its work will be at an end, and all those not favored will be those who, despite their knowledge of the divine character and the divine will, and despite their opportunities for coming into harmony with the same, will have refused to enter into the Father's gracious arrangements and plans. For such wilful sinners to be eventually destroyed will evidently be not only for their best interests but for the interests also of all those who are in accord with the Lord. Thus the Lord will eventually bring to pass the promise that every creature in heaven and in earth and under the earth shall be heard acknowledging and praising the God of our salvation, for he is worthy. (Rev. 5:13.) No discordant note shall be heard throughout the universe of God. Every member of Adam's race shall through Christ be granted a full opportunity for return to the relationship of the sons of God, and all the willing and obedient will receive the great blessing. Indeed also it will be a blessing to the unwilling and disobedient that they should be cut off in the Second Death, rather than that they should continue perverse and unhappy and injurious to others as well as to themselves.

"BLESSED ARE YOUR EARS, FOR THEY HEAR"

My Dear Brother Russell:—

I have wished for a long time to tell you my own experience in coming into the truth, but feared to trespass upon your valuable time. However, as my experience is (I hope) different from that of most other people, I am going to tell it that you may know how marvelously I have been blessed of the Lord through his servant, Brother Russell, but in order to fully understand the extent of the blessing you must know of the rebellion that once possessed me.

I was born of Universalist parents and brought up in that faith, and at the age of fourteen I united with that church. When I was fourteen years old I began to sing in a quartet choir in one of the churches in this city, and from that time until fifteen years ago, when I was compelled to give up my music on account of growing deafness, I was a member of a quartet choir in some church in town. For the last eight years or so before I was obliged to give it up, I was a member of a local concert organization, whose services were in large demand for entertainments and public installations of the various secret orders, Masons, Odd Fellows, etc., and a great many other occasions, besides our regular concert work. During the few years we were associated together we furnished music at over 300 funerals. Taking it all together my music was a large part of my life, and my greatest pleasure outside my home.

I was during most of those years a teacher in the Universalist Sunday school, and one of the chief workers there; was always willing to do anything in my power to help in

any good cause until my hearing utterly failed, when it seemed to me that I was of no further use to anyone or anything after that.

Soon after my 20th birthday I was married to one of the best of men, and it was about three years after our marriage that my hearing began to fail, gradually growing worse until about eight years ago, when I became stone deaf. Since that time I have been able to converse with people only when I have been able to "read their lips," or by writing or finger-spelling. So you see my husband has been a patient sharer of my affliction for twenty-seven years, during which time he has spent hundreds of dollars in having me try different so-called "cures for deafness."

We have one child, a daughter of almost sixteen years, but previous to her birth we had similar hopes three times—the little ones living but a few hours each. The loss of my babies, then the loss of my hearing, with all that implies, made me very bitter against our heavenly Father, and even caused me to doubt at times the very existence of such a being.

One day a few years ago, when a very dear old school-friend was visiting me, I was bemoaning my fate and she was trying to cheer and comfort me. Among other things she said, "It may be, Tena, that God has something better in store for you, and some time you will see that, although he has permitted this affliction to come upon you, it was in love, and may lead you to a still greater blessing." That aroused all my fiery indignation, and I replied, "I don't want any other blessing. I want those he has taken away!