

## VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER

"MAKING VOID THE WORD OF GOD BY YOUR TRADITIONS"  
—MARK 7:13

Comparatively few of the "common people" of Christendom realize how thoroughly the Word of God has *already* been rejected by the leading Doctors of theology. When, over twenty years ago, we pointed out from the Word of God that all classes of Christendom were about to be tested on the fundamentals of Christian faith, and that according to Psalm 91, a thousand would fall into unbelief to one who would stand *faithful*, some mocked—considering that no more absurd proposition could possibly be made. Apply this rule now to the 300,000,000 of Christendom and the number to stand would be 30,000.

In our last issue we noted that some candidates for ministerial office in the Presbyterian church had publicly disowned belief in Adam and Eve as the first parents of our race—considering that portion of the Scripture mythical, unreal, untrue; and how the Elizabeth (N. J.), Presbytery finally passed such an one,—who purposes to become a missionary. Since then the subject has been considerably discussed in the secular and religious press, and so far as we have noted, generally in sympathy with the *unbeliever*;—generally in condemnation of those who called in question the unbeliever's right to acceptance as "orthodox." This is truly a peculiar world: any one who believes in the second coming of our Lord to be the King of earth, as foretold in the Scriptures scores of times, is "off-color," "tainted" or "non-orthodox," according to the bias of his critics. The man who denies eternal torment as both unreasonable and unscriptural, and who calls for proof texts from the Bible (not parable and symbolic statements, but literal), or who denies that the Bible offers immortality in any sense or condition to the wicked, and asks for proof texts,—is denounced as a "heretic," as is also the man who declares that he believes in the Father and in the Son and in the holy Spirit, and that these are *at one*, or in full harmony, but who denies that it can be true that they are *one in person*, or that the Scriptures so state, and invites proof texts. On the other hand, whoever professes to believe these things which the Bible does not teach, and which reason repudiates, and who denies the Bible record of creation, accepting instead the unscriptural theory of evolution,—that man is promptly labeled orthodox, and any unwilling to so concede are promptly denounced as unenlightened fossils. Surely this is what the Lord referred to as putting light for darkness and darkness for light—calling evil good, and good evil.—Isa. 5:20.

The following is from the comment of the New York *Independent*, one of the leading "orthodox" religious journals of the world:—

"We venture to say that there is not a competent educated professor of biology or geology in the obscurest Presbyterian college in the United States who believes that the Adam and Eve of Genesis were historical characters. One would have to rake all our colleges and universities with a fine-toothed comb to find such a teacher, and very few they would be. The belief, in scientific circles, of such an Adam and Eve is dead, and is no longer considered or discussed. Of course, the doctrine of a literal Adam lingers in popular belief, just as once did the belief in the world made in six literal days; but it is held by those who got their education a generation or two ago, or who never got any education at all. *The older men in the presbyteries, especially those who have, for one reason or another, dropped out of the educative stress of pastoral life, have not learned what the colleges now teach; and it is they that oppose their large ignorance to modern knowledge.*"

What plainer statement of present conditions could we ask and from what higher authority could it come? Notice again the last sentence, which we have italicized: only old fogies—country preachers and the unlearned—any longer believe the Bible to be God's revelation. To the "cultured" it is a book of fairy tales mixed with pessimistic nonsense of weeping prophets who never dreamed of the grand time coming when the trust-giants shall hold full sway and bring in the Millennium of wealth and aristocracy. Not knowing so much as these modern teachers, "higher critics," the prophets dreamed and wrote of a second coming of Christ, and of the establishment of a kingdom of God under the whole heavens;—of a lifting up of the poor and the needy and a humbling of the great;—of a laying of righteousness to the line and justice to the plummet. Well, we prefer to be with the Lord and the Apostles: we prefer to believe "all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began."—Acts 3:19-21.

The editor of the (New York) *Mail and Express*, not being a trained theologian and Doctor of Divinity, shows his "backwoods" ideas on the subject as follows:—

"It is one thing to say that the story of Adam and Eve is a myth, and quite another to say that it is false. Embodied in the Scriptural account in the first chapter of Genesis is the most profound bit of wisdom, the most searching dip into the springs of human action in the face of the great mystery of life and divinity that surrounds us, the most vivid revelation of the power of God and the helplessness, yet hopefulness of life, that all the world's literature has brought down to us. It is fundamental in many ways. That the guardians of religious doctrine should seek to hold neophytes to a belief in it is not to be wondered at.

"A myth is but old, old speech. All things are spoken in some shape before they are written. The myth is the spoken, elder Scripture. Not all myths are entitled to become Scripture; but this one was so entitled—and it is true. If anything possesses authority in this doubting age, this record does. There may be more wisdom in the act of simple dominies who require rigid adherence to its letter than in the proceedings of those who treat it with flippant doubt."

This learned editor, in his anxiety to "straddle" the subject and to please both parties, has used the word *myth* in an unusual and unauthorized manner, which merely shows that he and others are well *shaken* in their credence of the Bible, though not yet ready to abandon it completely. We quote the Standard Dictionary's definition of this use of the word *myth*, as follows:—

"A fictitious or conjectural narrative presented as historical, but without any basis of fact; hence, an imaginary or fictitious person, object, or event; as Santa Claus is a myth.

"The difference between *legend* and *myth* is now well known. . . . The *myth* is purely the work of imagination, the *legend* has a nucleus of fact."

"*Synonyms, Antonyms and Prepositions.*" says:—

"A *legend* may be true, but can not be historically verified; a *myth* has been received as true at some time, but is now known to be false."

How long will it require for people to learn that the Bible is so thoroughly one, and its story one, that a repudiation of one part means the repudiation of the whole? For instance, some may reason that the truth or falsity of the story of Adam and Eve and their original perfection in their Eden home, has no bearing upon the general plan of salvation presented in the Scriptures; but in this they greatly err. If there was no *fall* from holiness and perfection, there could be no need of a Redeemer to *ransom* him and his posterity from such a condemnation; and the promised blessing of a restitution of man to Adam's primeval estate would be an absurdity.

But let the good work go on. For, as the Apostle said in his day,—*"There must be heresies also among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest."* (1 Cor. 11:19) Much more is this the case now: the "harvest" time of separating wheat from tares having come this seems to be the Lord's method of hastening it in its due season. "None of the wicked will understand, but the wise shall understand." (Dan. 12:10) The wise toward God, counted fools by the wisdom of this world, will begin to open their eyes to the true situation as this breach grows wider. They will begin to "inquire for the old paths," and then will be in the right condition to hear and heed the true Shepherd's voice and to comprehend with all saints the divine plan of the ages. These ("not many") are hungry for it now, but are deterred by the misrepresentations of the shepherds of Babylon whom they trust too implicitly,—taking their word without proving it by the Word of the Lord.

## RUSSIAN SOLDIERS REFUSE TO SHOOT AT MOB

The following quotation from the London *Pall Mall Gazette*, indicates that already the great "European public school" (the standing army), is learning its lesson and getting ready for the coming conflict:—

"During the demonstration in the Hazan Square, in St. Petersburg, a detachment of infantry was called upon to fire upon the crowd. The men thrice refused to obey, and were marched back to barracks, no inquiry being subsequently held. Similar incidents have occurred elsewhere. With universal service, the army is only the people in uniform. Any popular feeling must, sooner or later, touch the army, and if the soldiers cannot be depended upon to shoot, the game of absolutism is up."

### THE NEXT GREAT RELIGIOUS AWAKENING

The Rev. Dr. John Watson ("Ian Maclaren"), in a recent widely quoted sermon at the London Wesleyan Mission's anniversary, noted the fact that in late years great spiritual revivals have been lacking in England and that the present temper of mind is not prepared for such revivals. He went on to say that he believed we are on the eve of a great revival, but that it will be primarily a social revival, inspired by the religious spirit. What if God be calling on men, he asked, not to build more churches, but to secure better and purer homes for His people? To cleanse communities of liquor saloons and haunts of vice? To see that every man for whom Christ died should have a fair chance to do honest work with honest pay, and to have a home where he can live in decency with wife and children? May not these be the most efficient means to bring men into conscious fellowship with God?

The Rev. Dr. Josiah Strong, of New York, takes the same position in his new book, "The Next Great Awakening." All great religious revivals in the past, declares Dr. Strong, have come as the result of "the preaching of a neglected Scriptural truth which was precisely adapted to the peculiar needs of the times." Wesley and Whitefield, in an age in which religion seemed to be given over to outward and formal observances, preached the need of "conversion," the conscious beginning of a new spiritual life. Charles G. Finney, at a time when "the divine sovereignty of God was held in such a way as to destroy all appreciation of human freedom," thundered forth "the neglected truth of man's free-agency and guilt, and the retribution due to sin." Moody, following close upon the Civil War, when "millions of hearts were longing for consolation," preached "the love of God." And now, declares Dr. Strong, the church is on the verge of a new spiritual awakening:

"It is quite obvious that the great questions peculiar to our times are social. The industrial revolution has produced a social revolution: we have passed, within three generations, from an individualistic to a social or collective type of civilization. Relations which a hundred years ago were few and simple are now becoming many and complex. New questions concerning rights and duties are being asked. Society is gaining self-consciousness, which marks one of the most important steps in the progress of the race. We are beginning to see that society lives one vast life, of which every man is a part. We are gaining what Walter Besant calls 'the sense of humanity.' We are discovering that life is something larger and farther related than we had thought; and with this perception of wider and multiplied relations comes a new sense of social obligations. That is, a social conscience is growing, though as yet it is uninstructed.

"The wonderful increase of wealth and of knowledge during the past century has served to create a new discontent and to kindle a new hope. It has transferred the golden age of the world from the past to the future; and this golden age, yet to come, constitutes a new social ideal.

"The social ideal of Jesus is precisely what is needed to inform and spiritualize and perfect this new social ideal, and the social laws of Jesus are precisely what is needed to educate the new social conscience."

Dr. Strong interprets the "social laws of Jesus" under three main heads, as follows:

(1) The Law of Service. Our substance, our time, our powers, our opportunities are all entrusted to us for service. Life itself is a sacred trust, and the whole life of every disciple of Christ is to be spent, like that of his master, in the service of the kingdom, and in hastening its full coming in the earth.

(2) The Law of Sacrifice. The spirit of sacrifice gives all, and longs for more to fill the measure of the world's sore need. It is the high prerogative of conscious and intelligent man to offer conscious and intelligent sacrifice. He receives according to his need that he may give according to his ability, receives food that he may give strength, receives knowledge that he may give it forth as power.

(3) The Law of Love. This is the supreme social law, the great organizing, integrating power, precisely as its opposite, selfishness, is the great disorganizing, disintegrating, anti-social power. Disinterested love is divine; it is the love that God is, and makes possible Christian service and Christian sacrifice.

Dr. Strong proceeds to ask whether either church or society is making any serious attempt to realize these fundamental Christian laws, and he answers in the negative. "To be enthusiastic about the church in its present condition," he says, quoting the words of Professor Bruce, "is impossible." The church has become "a very respectable institution which

must be 'sustained.'" It is doing "much to conserve the heritage of the past, but not much to mold the future." Dr. Strong continues:—

"Let us suppose a church somewhere, whose members have such an enthusiasm for humanity that when they lie awake nights they are planning, not how to make money, but how to make *men*. Their supreme desire is to help the world in general and their own community in particular. They are striving daily to remove every moral and physical evil; trying to give every child who comes into the world the best possible chance; longing and working and praying and spending themselves and their substance to save men from sin and ignorance and suffering. Let us suppose the whole church is co-operating to this end. What a transformation such a church would work in any community! How it would 'reach the masses!' How it would grow! How it would be talked about and written up! Men would make pilgrimages to study its workings and its success. Yet such a church ought not to be in the least degree peculiar. This is simply the picture of a church whose membership is imbued with the social ideal of Jesus, and has taken seriously his social laws of service, sacrifice, and love; and this picture ought to be the likeness of every Christian church in every community. If it were, how many hours would it be before the kingdom would come with blessed fulness?"—*Digest*.

### INEFFECTUAL LABORS AMONG NAVAJO INDIANS

A Christian minister and his wife who left a Colorado pastorate six and a half years ago to do what they could to civilize and Christianize the Navajo Indians, gives the following report:

"We cannot either civilize or Christianize this tribe of Indians. We are not sure we can accomplish that for a single one of them. We cannot overcome the barriers of ignorance, superstition, barbarian language and physical contour of the country, that in every way prevents practical and effective evangelistic work. We cannot go beyond individual and domestic adaptabilities and limitations, which in so many ways determine our place and our calling.

"What we can do is to wait on God by prayer, believe his Word, follow him wholly, and try at least to prepare the way of the Lord in the hearts of the children, that he entrusts to our care. Perhaps, after a while we can have access to some of the older ones, through the children, or the children may be able to do it, when they have themselves learned the Gospel, and we have passed on to our reward.

"Will not our friends all pray often, that the Word of the Lord may have free course and God be glorified among this poor heathen people? And the work that we do, be wholly unto his pleasing, and the accomplishment of his will?

"We are not so much concerned over the question as to what good we can accomplish here, as we are about our own conformity to God's purposes and methods of work for us, and our appointed part in the fulfilment of his Word. It is his 'counsel that shall stand.' (Isa. 46:11) He 'has spoken, and he will bring things to pass; He has purposed and he will do it.' If, therefore, we can only know, morning by morning, our place and work and really be co-laborers with him in the fulfilment of his purpose; and if we will honestly and loyally 'walk as Jesus walked,' intent only on pleasing our Father, we shall feel that we have at least approximated the fulfilment of our calling, though to human sight it may seem that we have spent all our strength for nought, and all our labor has been vain."

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We heartily sympathize with these dear fellow-servants in their disappointment, but believe that their efforts and labors have not been in vain;—that they themselves have been blessed, because they self-sacrificingly have sought to do the Lord's will—to be co-laborers with him. We trust that they and others like them may soon learn "the way of the Lord more perfectly";—may soon learn of the divine plan of the ages. Then they will see that the poor Indians are in no danger of eternal torment; but will in God's "due time" (during the Millennium—1 Tim. 2:6) be brought to a knowledge of the truth in a way they cannot bring it to them now. The same great plan of the ages will show them that our Lord Jesus and his apostles did not carry the gospel to the most degraded nations, but to the most intelligent people they could find. And that the gospel is intended now only to select an "elect" or bride class as their Master's joint-heirs in the coming kingdom—who, jointly with their Lord, shall "bless all the families of the earth." But their labor, honestly though not wisely spent, shall not be in vain in the Lord. He is speaking now to all such, and they will hear and will know the great Shepherd's voice.

### ROME'S POSITION IN THE COMING CONFLICT

In accord with the Pope's recent Encyclicals, Roman Catholic newspapers and clergy are seeking to unify all Roman Catholic societies, and to put them on more of a political basis; and are correspondingly opposing Labor societies and especially Socialism. The object evidently is to make every Catholic vote here count for the interests of Rome, as in Europe—only more so, on account of our more liberal laws. A prominent Roman Catholic bishop recently expressed in public the conviction that ere long Catholics will be in practical control of the United States government. Nor was this an idle boast. If the Romanist vote can be controlled solidly by their clerics they could ask almost anything they please of politicians and be sure of getting it,—from one party if refused by another.

We are not to forget either that the Scriptures clearly show that church influence (Protestantism co-operating with Catholicism) is soon to gain control of Christendom and rule the world with an iron hand. The combining of the Catholics may soon lead to semi-political combinations amongst Protestants—Good Citizenship Leagues, etc., for which Christian Endeavor, Epworth League and similar societies, are preparations. All this is in full accord with the desire now so prevalent to have a church trust or combine for the "control" of the world's spiritual interests. All this, as our constant readers well know, we consider part of the *evil* which the Lord is permitting, and which will result in the complete collapse of present institutions in anarchy;—preparatory to the establishment of the kingdom of heaven.

### BISHOP QUIGLEY ON SOCIALISM

As indicating the line of battle outlined, we quote from Bishop Quigley's address as printed in the *Catholic Union and Times*, Buffalo, N. Y., as follows:—

"As a political party Social-Democracy is a recent importation from continental Europe. Here, as there, its avowed object is the creation of a new order of things totally destructive of the existing social, political, and economic conditions under which we live. The attainment of this new order of things is to be effected by political agitation in the main, but revolutionary and violent methods are freely urged by its leading advocates as soon as the masses shall be sufficiently organized to cope with the powers of capital and class.

"Everywhere this movement is characterized by unbelief, hostility to religion, and above all, uncompromising and bitter hatred and denunciation of the Catholic church. Its official programs, the platforms of its party conventions, the public utterances of its leading advocates, its newspaper organs and periodicals, breathe hatred and threats against revealed religion, its doctrines and institutions. . . .

"Social-Democracy denies the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, eternal punishment, the right of private ownership, the rightful existence of our present social organization, and the independence of the church as a society complete in itself and founded by God. Therefore no Catholic can become a Social-Democrat. Therefore no Catholic can become a member of a Social-Democratic organization or subscribe for or in any way contribute to the support of a Social-Democratic newspaper organ."

### THE REPLY OF SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY

Under the caption,—"Shall the Church Rule the Labor Movement?" *The Worker* of New York City says:—

"The bishop's charge is a sweeping one. We now challenge him, as bishop or as honest man, to prove, not the whole, but one-hundredth part of what he has alleged. He can not do it, for it is not true. Our national party platform is printed in this paper; let readers search there for 'hatred, denunciation, and threats' against the Catholic church or any other. We have in our ranks, not only men holding to the beliefs of Protestant churches, but men belonging to the same communion with Bishop Quigley and wearing the same cloth of priesthood. In the Socialist movement we ask no man his creed. We demand only his faithful adherence to the working class in its battle with the forces of capitalism. . . .

"Bishop Quigley, let us advise you to reconsider your

action. Your attack is an unprovoked one, for the Socialist party makes no attack upon you or your church or your beliefs. But if you persist in the attack, let us tell you that there is no organization on earth that can fight as we can. Bismarck has measured strength with us, and failed. Russian czars and French dictators have tried to crush our movement, and they have failed. You will not succeed.

"There is nothing more fearful than the fires of religious prejudice and antagonism. We have sought to let them slumber till they should at last die out. Beware how you stir them up. The people of America are patient and good-natured; they endure much. But at heart—Catholic and Protestant and Jew and Atheist alike—they hold dear the principle of religious liberty and the separation of church and state. Once awake them and it will not be well for him who attacks that principle.

"The Democratic party may be afraid of you, bishop. The Republican party may be afraid of you. But the Socialist party is not afraid of you, because it is right, because it stands for all that is best in American history and in the world's history, and because it knows that, the fiercer your attack, the greater forces will you rally to our side."

### A PECULIAR ITEM FROM A CATHOLIC JOURNAL

"How can we describe it so as to make it real! Some day this old earth will be perfect. Sin and wrong, passion and conflict, danger and weakness will be driven away, and only the good and the beautiful things will remain. Some day our powers will be unlimited and we can do just what we purely desire. No mistakes then in reaching the highest ideals! No failures in bringing the noblest sound with musician's finger, or the most glorious scenes from artist's brush! No misunderstandings or misconceptions, no criticisms to cut and hurt; for our work will be perfect. Some day our friendships will be rich and lasting and without disappointment, and heart will touch heart with an enduring love."—Rev. F. W. Tomkins.

### WHAT HIGHER CRITICISM HAS DONE

A writer in the *Washington Post*, summarizing an article on this subject in the *Outlook*, says, among other things of the higher critics' *useful* (?) work,—

"The divinity of Christ is retained, but in a new sense. He is divine just as all men have that spark of divinity, although not to such a marked degree. His divinity rests not on proof texts of doubtful interpretation, but on the evident manifestation of his whole life.

"The plan of salvation is not founded on a vicarious sacrifice where God bargains to accept the punishment of the innocent for the sins of the guilty. Redemption is the result of repentance, a psychological process thoroughly logical, and in the light of human frailty perfectly adequate.

"Our faith in future life is not less firm, although our conception of immortality is not so clear. The wonders of the hereafter, so vivid to the Indian, who believes in his happy hunting grounds, do not present themselves in a definite form, and this may seem to many a distinct loss. Its compensation is found, however, in the fact that we do not regard the attainment of heaven our only aim in life. Right for right's sake, with the barter element eliminated, cannot be less noble than living up to the best that is in us, with the hope of reward or the fear of punishment continually hanging over us."

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We can see no reason in the world why any infidel or agnostic in the world should object to Higher Criticism; but we do see every reason in the world why true Christians who trust for salvation in "the precious blood of Christ" should disown all fellowship and brotherhood with such unbelief. Yet some good men as well as many others, have fallen into this error: the only safeguard against it to a reasonable mind is the divine plan of the ages. We must do all in our power to get it into the hands and heads and hearts of such before the error catches them; for those who once get the poison of human philosophy into their hearts, and reject the ransom, are, so far as observation goes, beyond help in the present age.

## ATTAINING CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

ACTS 15:22-33.—JUNE 8, 1902.

"Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free."—Gal. 5:1.

Christian liberty is to be sharply differentiated from the liberty of license, lawlessness, anarchy; and this lesson furnishes a good illustration of this fact. To the Jews who had been under the Mosaic ritual and its washings, fastings, feasts, new moons, sabbaths and holy days, Christian liberty meant a release from a considerable measure of these institu-

tions, many of which were typical and educational—suited to the "house of servants," but not appropriate to the "house of sons." To the Gentiles, to whom God had never given the Law, and who were therefore not under any of its provisions or conditions or requirements, but who were under certain superstitions, wrong appetites and customs, Christian liberty

meant the abrogation of all wrong customs and superstitions, and, additionally, the imposing of a law;—not the Mosaic Law and its institutions and ceremonies, however, but “the Perfect Law of Liberty;” the “Law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus”—restraints of the will of the flesh, under the law of love. (Jas. 1:25; Rom. 8:2) We are not to be surprised that both Jews and Gentiles, coming from opposite directions into the church of Christ and its perfect law of liberty, were somewhat confused and bewildered respecting its requirements and proprieties.

It was nearly twenty years after the day of Pentecost that the conference noted in our lesson took place in Jerusalem. It was held for the purpose of reaching a decision respecting this very subject—the Law of Christ, its bearing upon Gentile converts, and upon Jewish converts—to what extent the Mosaic requirements were abolished as regarded the Jews, and to what extent the Law of Christ put restraints upon the converts from amongst the Gentiles, and to what extent these two classes, previously separated socially and religiously, by the requirements of the Mosaic Law, might now come together with full brotherly fellowship and affinity, without the violation of the consciences of any, and without unnecessary restraint of the liberties of any.

The church at Antioch had become the center of Christianity amongst the Gentiles, and Jews born in Gentile lands. Its Gentile surroundings, no less than its membership, tended to cultivate in it a broad spirit of Christian liberty,—some of its membership, under the influence of brethren who had come from Jerusalem, feared that it had gone too far in the matter of Christian liberty, and held that Gentiles, upon accepting Christ through faith, should likewise accept Judaism and the Mosaic Law, and come as fully under the conditions of these, including circumcision, as though they had been born Jews. Certain brethren who had recently arrived from Jerusalem accentuated these fears, and as a result there was quite a dissension in the Antioch church, amounting, as the Greek word shows, almost to a schism, a split. But the right spirit evidently prevailed; because, instead of splitting over a vexed question, each party respected the conscientious convictions of the other, and it was wisely determined to appeal the matter to the church at Jerusalem for such words of counsel and advice as its leaders, the apostles and elders, should see fit to give. The Antioch brethren evidently had full confidence that God had appointed the apostles, and that their conclusion on the matter would ultimately be the correct one. At the same time, knowing that the brethren at Jerusalem were surrounded by the Judaizing influence, tending rather to narrowness of view as respected the Mosaic customs, they sent their two leading representatives, Paul and Barnabas, to present before the Jerusalem Council the views which seemed to the majority of the church to be the correct ones,—that thus the entire subject might be fully, fairly, thoroughly investigated, and the mind of the Lord determined as accurately as possible.

This was a beautiful spirit—the right spirit; far more commendable in God's sight and in the judgment of sound-minded men than any immoderate course they could have taken. People who take the immoderate course are generally those who do not have sufficient faith in the Lord as the real Head of the church, and in his overruling providence in the affairs of those who are seeking to know and to do his will;—they are generally those who feel too much self-assurance, as did even the meek Moses, when he erred in smiting the rock in the wilderness the second time saying: “Ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?”—Num. 20:10.

The truth has nothing to lose by fairness, openness, and a reasonable moderation and the turning on of all light obtainable. And while the church at Antioch evidently had great confidence in Paul and Barnabas, they properly also had great confidence and respect for the apostles at Jerusalem, and reasoned that since these men all gave evidence that they were truly the Lord's special servants and mouthpieces, it would be strange indeed if meeting together and hearing all that could be said on both sides of the question, they could not arrive at a unanimous decision respecting the Lord's will, that would assure the church in general. We commend this noble principle which is as applicable now as it was then. Today, however, as we cannot refer questions to the living Apostles, we must refer them to the recorded teaching of our Lord and the apostles,—seeking assistance in this amongst the brethren who appear to have the best knowledge of God's Word and the greatest insight into the divine plan.

#### EN ROUTE TO THE JEWISH CONFERENCE

The journey from Antioch to Jerusalem brought Paul and Barnabas in contact with many of the household of faith, a few, here and there, in almost every city through which they passed. Of course, the brethren were glad to hear, as these

ex-missionaries were glad to tell them, of God's favors upon their missionary labors in Galatia and vicinity; and although the brethren reached were almost exclusively Jewish converts. It is with pleasure we read that the report “caused great joy unto all the brethren.” (Acts 15:3) This shows that they had the true Christian spirit—that they had largely, if not completely, lost the Jewish prejudice and jealousy, as concerned the giving of the gospel to the Gentiles. It shows us that with the majority of the previously Jewish brethren the contention for the Mosaic Law and ceremonies implied no opposition to the Gentiles themselves, but merely a confusion of mind concerning the Lord's will on these subjects;—they had not yet discerned the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the divine plan, as they subsequently learned these, and came to appreciate the perfect Law of Liberty wherewith Christ makes free indeed, in the true sense, all who become truly his.

Arrived at Jerusalem, the representatives of the Antioch congregation were met with a hearty welcome, for such is the significance of the Greek word rendered “received,” in verse 4. As they had given to the others en route, so the returned missionaries gave the Jerusalem brethren detailed accounts of the Lord's blessing upon their journey, telling what miracles and wonders he had wrought, that a considerable number had believed, and how loyal, faithful and enduring were some of these newly-found brethren in Christ, who had previously been aliens, strangers, Gentiles.

There is some reason for believing that previous to this Paul and Barnabas and Titus had made a visit to Jerusalem, in which they did not, as now, appear publicly before the congregation to give their testimonies, but had secret conferences with the apostles and chief brethren, Paul explaining to them what he understood to be the perfect Law of Liberty under the New Covenant—the will and plan of God regarding the gospel amongst the Gentiles. It would appear that the apostles had been largely influenced by those presentations, although they had not uttered any public testimony on the subject, nor engaged in any manner in the missionary work amongst the Gentiles. Apparently they had not considered it necessary to stir up the subject to any extent, and thus possibly to breed more or less of strife amongst the Jewish converts. Thus the subject had been left for some years for gradual development and enlargement of heart and mind on the part of the believers. This thought is based upon the Apostle Paul's statement in his letter to the Galatians, on this subject.—Gal. 2.

But now the question of receiving Gentiles, and how they should be treated, and what were their obligations, etc., came up in a natural way, without forcing—rather, it forced itself for decision. The apostles and elders heard the reports of God's blessing upon the Gentiles, and offered no objection, evidently being quite in accord with the matter from the first; but, as was to be expected, there was dissatisfaction amongst brethren who previously had been Pharisees. This sect of the Jews was firmly set, not only for the Law of Moses and all of its ceremonies, but also for many additions and accretions to it; so that they were quite dissatisfied, we remember, with our Lord's observance of the Law, which we know was perfect. These, in all honesty, objected that the missionaries were too lax, too slack in their work, and that all believers should be required to be circumcised and to keep the Mosaic laws respecting fasts, new moons, sabbath days, washings, etc.

Thus the question was brought forward, and a special meeting was appointed, at which the apostles and elders heard all that was to be said on the subject,—and we read that there was “much dispute.” We do not want to say a word in favor of disputes, wrangling, etc., amongst the Lord's people. On the contrary, we understand the Scriptures to teach that wranglings in general are improper, out of order, injurious to the interests of the church and of the truth;—because such wranglings and disputes are generally about things to no profit, but to the subverting or unsettling of the believers, and especially of those who are new or weak in the faith. But it is a different matter when the question is an important one, as was this under discussion; and at such a time dispute, in the proper manner, with the spirit of love, with force and yet with kindness, love and gentleness of word and manner, is most appropriate.

We rejoice that there was such a spirit of broadmindedness in the early church as is represented by this statement—we rejoice that when an important subject was to be considered, with a view to knowing the mind of the Lord, that there was fullest liberty granted for as much dispute or debate, in a proper manner, as was necessary to bring the whole subject before those who had it under consideration. There is a difference, however, between disputes and discussions inside the

pale of faith and disputes outside that boundary. As the Apostle says, "He that is weak in the faith receive ye [do not reject him because he has not such full, strong, vigorous faith as we should like to see], but not to doubtful disputations"—do not receive him to dispute his doubts,—what he does not believe. Let him have a full opportunity for hearing the faith discussed; if his doubts do not then disappear probably he himself will disappear,—drop out of the assembly. In harmony with this we are not to recognize disputes respecting the *foundation principles* of the gospel of Christ. The church is composed only of those who recognize the foundation—that Christ died for our sins, for our redemption from sin and from its penalty; and that all who would share his blessing must accept these simple facts of his death for us and his resurrection by the power of God for our ultimate deliverance;—and then in harmony with their desire to be his disciples they must make a consecration of themselves to him, to do his will and to serve his cause. These foundation principles of the church of Christ are not subject to dispute. Those who reject these are not of the church and should not be heard in the church. They are intruders; doubtless wolves in sheep's clothing, of evil and not of good intentions and ultimate results.

But as respects discussions amongst those who are truly the Lord's on any point of importance,—opportunity for freedom of discussion, within reasonable limits, is absolutely necessary to spiritual health and progress. To shut it off means to crush proper activities of thought, and in many instances means to accumulate a force which would ultimately result in an explosion, which would be damaging in some respects at least. Let us remember, in this matter, the Golden Rule; and let us accord to others differing from us the same reasonable liberty, inside the boundaries of foundation principles, that we would like to have them accord to us, if our positions were reversed.

The fact that the question at issue was—the obligation of Gentile converts to the law, is not to be understood as signifying that the law of Moses was recognized as being of binding force upon Jewish converts. All were bound to concede that the Law-Covenant had saved none—that Christ's fulfilment of it brought all under divine grace. It was more a question of usage—the Jews were used to circumcision which preceded the law, used to abstaining from pork, not only merely because the law forbade it, but because aside from the law they considered it unclean. What the Jew did in the exercise of his liberty he thought the Gentile should be forced to do;—a very common error with many. It requires development to learn to use our conscience and liberty and to let others use theirs, even though they differ.

When a fair hearing had been granted to both sides of the question, Peter, one of the leading apostles, and doubtless the eldest, rehearsed his experiences with Cornelius; then Paul and Barnabas were heard, and James closed the discussion. All upheld the teachings and practices of Paul and Barnabas, and cited the leadings of the Lord's spirit, as well as the prophecies of the Old Testament in corroboration of this position which, doubtless, as above suggested, they had held tentatively for some time, though they only now thought it necessary to make a public statement regarding it. The conclusion was satisfactory to the apostles and elders and the whole church; and an answer in harmony with this was sent to the friends at Antioch, Syria, and throughout Silicia—the regions which had been affected by the Judaizing teachers. It is here that the lesson proper begins.

To give weight to the letter, two of the prominent brethren of Jerusalem were sent with Paul and Barnabas and the letter, that they might confirm the letter orally, and thus establish the hearts of those who had been somewhat troubled by the false teachings. The letter first disclaims any authority for those persons who had, however honestly intentioned, taught error with truth, and confused the hearts of the believers on the subject of circumcision and the law. It states also the conclusions of the conference, and commends Barnabas and Paul, calling them "beloved," and noting the fact that they had hazarded their lives in the Lord's cause. The decision rendered is expressed as being the mind of "the holy Spirit and us." We may reasonably presume that the meaning of this is that the church not only found the teachings of the Scripture and the leadings of the divine providence to be in favor of the acceptance of the Gentiles to Christian liberty, without becoming Jews or coming under the Law, but that this finding of the Lord's will was not against the wishes or prejudices of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem;—that it found a ready echo, a hearty response in their hearts.

#### RECOMMENDATION RESPECTING OUTWARD CONDUCT

God's dealings and instructions commended themselves both

to their hearts and to their reasons, and covered four points. (1) Abstaining from meats offered to idols, which might appear to be giving sanction to idol worship. (2) Abstaining from the eating of the blood of animals. (3) Abstaining from eating things that had been strangled, in which the blood would remain, which would imply the eating of blood. (4) The avoidance of fornication.

In considering these rules we are to keep in memory the circumstances and conditions of the times, and the objects sought to be attained. (1) The idol worship which prevailed at that time had connected with it a great deal of sensuality, which would be contrary to the spirit of Christ in every sense of the word. (2) The object was to permit a ground of fellowship and brotherhood between those whose previous experiences and instructions had been lax, and those whose previous instructions had been rigid. And the things here required of the Gentiles were not merely features of the Mosaic Law, for the forbidding of the use of blood, and the explanation that it represented the life, was given long previous to Moses' day—to Noah after the flood, when he and his posterity were granted the privilege of eating meat, because of the changed conditions and the impoverishment of the race, and the need of more stimulating food. The use of blood was still more common then than now, being used not only in blood puddings, but also as a drink mixed with wine, as some today use beef extract blended with wine.

The message was received in faith by all, and caused universal rejoicing in the church. There was a general recognition of the Lord's providential care in the church's affairs, and this faith and confidence in God prepared all parties to receive the message on this subject, which they believed God would assuredly give them, and which they had rightly looked for through the channels which God had previously been using for their blessing and edification. Thus we have a lesson respecting the proper course of the Lord's dear people today,—not to carry disputes, even on important matters (not fundamental) to the length of rupture, division, but, with hearts anxious to know and obey the truth, inquiry should be made of the oracles of God, and the results, after a fair hearing of all the testimony, should be conclusive, satisfactory, and bring consolation—peace and joy—so that the unity of the faith in the bonds of love may continue within the walls of Zion.

The two brethren who came as representatives of the Jerusalem Church were prophets, or public teachers, and, as was intended, they exhorted the church in harmony with the letter they bore, and confirmed and strengthened them. Thus what might have been a serious rupture, resulting in much damage and in many roots of bitterness, antagonisms, etc., became really a means of increased blessing to all connected therewith, because wisely and properly handled. May such occasions be likewise treated by the Lord's people today, and with similar blessed results, under the guidance of the same Lord and Master who more than eighteen centuries ago guided by his Word and spirit.

#### THE LIBERTY WHEREWITH CHRIST HAS MADE US FREE

Our Golden Text is a precious one. The value of true liberty amongst the Lord's people cannot be overestimated. It becomes a part of their very life. It was because, under a wrong conception of union, this spirit of true liberty was crushed out of the church shortly after the apostles fell asleep in death that the "dark ages" resulted,—with all their ignorance, superstition, blindness, persecution, etc. The Reformation movement of the sixteenth century was but a reawakening of the spirit of liberty mentioned in our text,—liberty to think inside the foundation lines of the doctrines of Christ;—liberty to believe as much or as little more, in harmony with this, as the mental conditions and circumstances will permit, without being branded as a heretic or persecuted by brethren, either in word or deed.

Strange to say, a peculiar combination—of too much liberty and too little liberty—is creeping over nominal Christendom today. The too little liberty feature objects to any discussion of the doctrines of Christ, and the teachings of the apostles, for fear some differences of opinion should be manifested. This is an endeavor to have an outward "union" without a union of the heart and a union of the head. It is injurious, both to those who hold the error, which cannot be exposed, and injurious also to those who hold the truth and who permit themselves thus to be bound, and hindered from growth in grace and knowledge by the proper exercise of the liberties wherewith Christ has made his people free. The general trend along this line favors the covering over, the concealment, of truths as well as errors, in a wrong assumption that the appearance of union will serve the purpose of real union, and be really effective as respects the prosperity of



the true members of the body of Christ. Such a false union, however, is coming and will be effected, and to such extent cause prosperity in the nominal church, but only for a brief season, when the time of trouble shall overwhelm all.

On the other hand the too great liberty which we see drawing on, is that represented by the teachings of the higher critics and evolutionists. Their teachings are given in quiet, in the theological seminaries, at the fireside, in the daily interchanges, and in the pulpit; and any attempt to contradict these false doctrines is tabooed, as being calculated to stir up strife and destroy the unity of the church. Thus the too great liberty and the too great bondage are working together in the nominal church systems today, to thoroughly expel and ostracize the truth, and all who love it and wish to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free. It is calculated to install and multiply and qualify and honor the error, which so rapidly is gaining control, altho the control be generally denied. Let all who are the Lord's people, and who have tasted of the liberty wherewith Christ makes free, see to it that they stand fast in that liberty, and as soon as an attempt is made to restrain it, if not sooner, let them get out completely from all the bondages of human

systems, that they may stand firmly and loyally with the Lord, our Redeemer, our Instructor, our King.

The question may arise, Does this direction to abstain from meat offered to idols conflict with the Apostle's later teachings addressed to the Corinthians? (1 Cor. 8) We answer, No. The Apostle is not advocating the eating of meat previously offered to idols; but on the contrary, is answering some who so practiced. He is admitting the logic of their argument, that an idol being nothing but so much wood or metal or stone the meat could be neither benefited nor injured by the offering. But he shows that the restriction should be practiced in the interest of some of less logical mind who would be unable to comprehend this and who would thus be led to defile their consciences, and thus into sin;—which might abound more and more, eventually, to their destruction. For the voice of conscience must be obeyed: it is at our peril that it is violated—no matter how erroneous and superstitious may be its standards. Let conscience be educated; but let its ignorance never be violated. Every violation of conscience is so much of character destruction. All need to remember this in respect to their own consciences as well as in dealing with others—especially with children.

## ABIDING IN DIVINE LOVE, CONDITIONAL

*"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."*—John 15:10.

Since all mankind are alienated from their Creator through sin and its condemnation, the application of the text by any individual implies that previously he has come to a knowledge of God's grace in Christ, and has accepted his share of the same through faith and has thus had access to the love of God, as one of the sons of God, begotten by the holy Spirit. This is an important matter overlooked by very many who think to keep themselves in divine love and under divine protecting care without first complying with the conditions of admission to membership in the Lord's family. There is but one doorway of entrance "into this grace wherein we stand and [as sons of God] rejoice in the hope of the coming glory," and that is the doorway of faith in and acceptance of the atonement, accomplished for us by our Redeemer at the cost of his own sacrifice at Calvary. Anyone attempting to climb into the family of God otherwise "the same is a thief and a robber"—a rejector of the only way and name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.—Rom. 5:1, 2; Acts 4:12.

But our text, like all of the holy Scriptures, is addressed to the Lord's people, who once were "children of wrath even as others," but have come into divine favor through the appointed way; and it calls our attention to something that is necessary to us beyond, after our full conversion or consecration to the Lord. It implies that getting into God's love is by no means the end of the Christian way, but merely the beginning of it: after we are in the way the Lord gives us commandments as his sons, and expects us to manifest the spirit of loyal sonship by obedience;—full obedience so far as the heart or intention is concerned, and as complete obedience as possible so far as the control of the flesh is concerned. Whoever neglects either to learn or to obey the commandments of the Lord, thereby manifests a lack of the true spirit of sonship, and thus condemns himself as unworthy to be longer reckoned or treated as a son of God. Thus seen the commandments of the Lord to those who have consecrated themselves and enter his spirit-begotten family, are tests, proving them either worthy or unworthy of the divine favors and promises assured to the faithful overcomers.

The object of these tests is manifest from the time we come to understand the divine plan of the ages—to comprehend how the Lord is now making selection of a royal priesthood to be joint-heirs with Christ the great King, and to join in the work of succoring, ruling, blessing and uplifting the world of mankind in God's due time, the world's "day of judgment," the Millennial age. We can readily see that divine law is necessary, in heaven and in earth, in order that God's will may be done—that righteousness, truth and love shall prevail; and it is manifest that whoever is not sufficiently in sympathy with the principles of righteousness expressed in the Lord's commandments, so as to will and to strive to obey them, would not be a fit person to be used of the Lord in enforcing the divine laws during the Millennial age, and assisting mankind in discerning their righteousness and the blessing which will follow their observance.

### WHAT ARE THESE COMMANDMENTS?

Properly, we inquire, What are these commandments, the keeping of which is attended with such momentous results, and

the neglect of which would mean the loss of our Redeemer's love and favor,—and hence, the loss of all the blessings specially prepared for those who love him? We answer, that our Lord's statement of these commandments briefly comprehends them all in one word, love. Dividing the matter, we find that it has two parts—love for God and love for our fellows. Without this quality or characteristic, of love, being so developed in us as to be the controlling influence of our minds, we cannot hope to abide in the Lord's favor. True, he does not expect to gather ripe grapes from the new vine-shoot when first it makes its appearance; rather, the great Husbandman (1 Cor. 3:9) waits for the gradual development of the fruit, if after the shoot has come forth he sees upon it the bud of promise, which quickly develops, manifesting itself as the flower of the grapes. Nevertheless, manifestations of a coming fruitage of love are expected of the Lord, quickly after our union with him; and any smallness of development of this fruitage would indicate a corresponding lack of love and appreciation on our part, and would mean correspondingly small love for the truth and its principles: hence, the Lord's love for us would be correspondingly less than if more rapid progress were made.

Love would necessarily mean the according of justice; because the law or requirements of the Lord are based upon justice, "the foundation of his throne." We are to view the commandments of the Lord from this standpoint, therefore, and to see first that our love for God is just,—must recognize that we owe him love, devotion, appreciation, because of what he has done and promises yet to do for us. Justice calls for our loving, reverential obedience to the Lord. It is the same with respect to our love for our fellowmen. Justice, as well as respect for our Heavenly Father's regulations, calls on us to do right to our neighbor,—to do toward him as we would have him do toward us. This is not more than absolute justice, and yet it is the very essence and spirit of the divine law of love. But while justice is the first feature of the commandment of love, it is not the end of its requirements: it requires that going beyond strict justice, our love shall prompt us to the exercise of mercy and forgiveness. And in thus exercising mercy, we are again but copying divine love; for our Heavenly Father not only deals with all his creatures according to justice, but going beyond the lines of justice, in great compassion and mercy he provided in Christ Jesus a Redeemer for sinners. True, he did not provide this in violation of his justice; yet so far as we are concerned it is just the same as though out of love and compassion, he had overridden justice in our assistance. Hence in our dealings with others, who like ourselves, are fallen and imperfect, we are to remember this feature and not only be just toward them but additionally to be merciful, generous, kind, even to the unthankful,—that thus we may be children of our Father in heaven.

The Lord through the Prophet expresses this thought of how the law of love is divisible and covers all the requirements of Christian character; he says, "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8) That these are very reasonable requirements will be conceded by all; that God could not require less from those whom he is educating

for the future judging of the world, is evident: and, yet, all three of these qualities specified through the Prophet, are comprehended in the one word love. Love requires that we shall deal justly with our neighbors, with the brethren, with our families, with ourselves; that we shall seek to cultivate our appreciation of the rights of others,—their physical rights, their moral and intellectual rights, their liberties; and that, appreciating these, we shall in no sense of the word, seek to abridge or deny them.

To "love mercy" is to go even beyond loving justice, and signifies a delight in yielding personal rights and privileges in the interest of others, where no principles are involved. It implies readiness to forgive the faults of others—a disinclination to be too exacting in respect to others, as well as a desire to be very exacting in respect to our treatment of others. The humble walk with God is included, also, in the commandment of love; because, whoever loves his Creator and appreciates his provisions for his creatures, in natural and in spiritual things, will love and appreciate God in return. And having such a proper conception of the greatness of the Almighty and of his own littleness and insufficiency, except by divine grace, he will be disposed indeed, to walk humbly with the Lord—not seeking paths of his own, but, trustingly, seeking to walk in the path which the Lord has marked out—in the footsteps of Jesus.

The same Apostle John who recorded our Lord's words of our text, commented further upon this subject of the love of God and of Christ saying "This is the love of God [i. e., proves or demonstrates our love of God], that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous." (1 John 5:3) This gives us the suggestion that the Lord not only expects us to keep his commandments of love to him and to the brethren, but that he expects also that in keeping these we should become so filled with an appreciation of the commandments and the principles that underlie them, that we would delight therein; not merely because they are God's commandments, but, additionally, because they are right, good, proper. This thought the Apostle expresses in the words, "And his commandments are not grievous." It is one thing to keep the divine commands or to seek to do so, all the while feeling more or less of restraint, lack of liberty, compulsion, duty, etc.; it is another thing to obey joyfully.

It is not improper to expect something of this spirit at the beginning of our experience as the Lord's people, seeking to keep his commandments; but we should expect, also, that as we grow in grace and grow in knowledge and grow in love, all these feelings of constraint, duty, etc., would disappear; so that, instead, we should delight to do the Lord's will, delight to keep his commandments of love, delight to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with God,—and that there should be a total absence of the feeling that the Lord's commandments are grievous, burdensome, irksome. This is the higher Christian development, and can only be found where the individual has become truly "a copy of God's dear Son," where the Father's spirit has developed and brought forth the ripe fruits of the spirit in abundant measure—meekness, patience, gentleness, brotherly kindness, love.

Recurring to our text, we note that our Lord's words also imply the same thing;—the necessity for obedience to the commandments of love, and to such a growth ultimately as would separate them from any feeling of bondage or grievousness. Our Lord's words, showing this, are in the latter part of the text—"even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."

As we look back at the beautiful character of our Lord Jesus and see his love for righteousness, for truth, and his willingness to be obedient to his Father's arrangements—even unto death—we can perceive readily that our dear Master had a love for the principles which lie back of the Father's commandments. He obeyed the Father, not through restraint, not through fear, but from a perfect love. Recognizing the Father's commandments, but not as being grievous, using the language put by the Prophet into his mouth, his sentiment was, "I delight to do thy will, O my God, thy law is in my heart." (Psalm 40:8) We are to understand the Lord, therefore, to mean, that in order to abide in his love we must reach such a heart condition as this which he had;—a love for the Father's ways, for the principles of righteousness and truth. We may abide in his love at first under other conditions, feeling through our love the restraints of his commandment of love, but as we grow in knowledge, we must grow in grace, and outgrow those sentiments, and grow up into the Lord's spirit and sentiment in this matter; so that obedience to the Lord will be the delight of our hearts, and any failure to do his will would cause a pain, a shadow, an earth-born cloud, to hide us from the Father's smile.

Seeing the depths of our Lord's requirements, many will be inclined to say, Ah, yes, it is true that we must attain to such character-likeness of our Lord, but that transformation and renewing of the mind is not our part of the work but the Lord's: He must do this for us, else it will never be done. Partly right and partly wrong, we answer. It is true that when we consider ourselves, how weak and imperfect we are according to the old nature, according to the flesh, we have good cause for despairing and deciding that we never could accomplish such a great transformation from selfishness to love, in our own strength. It is true, also, that the Lord proposes to work in us—"both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. 2:13) But it is just as true that we have a burden of responsibility in respect to this matter of overcoming. It is the Lord's part to provide the way, the truth, the life,—the means by which we may attain unto the condition to which he has called us; but it is our part to use the means and thus to attain the prize.

The Lord has provided for our justification, our reconciliation to himself, our acceptance to sonship, our anointing with the holy Spirit, our instructions with the word of his grace, the word of promise: He works in us, to will and to do, through these exceeding great and precious promises and the glorious prospects and rewards that attach to them; but the amount that he will work in us and the results that will be worked out through these promises, depend upon us. As it depended upon us whether or not we would come into the grace which he has provided for us, and as we could have kept ourselves out of the love of God by refusing or neglecting the offer of his mercy and love, so we could neglect the word of his promise, neglect the various means of grace which he provides for our strengthening, establishing and upbuilding in the knowledge and grace of the truth. And thus neglecting his provisions we would proportionately fail to abide in his love—fail to obtain the promised favors. The Apostle intimates this, saying:—

"KEEP YOURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD."—JUDE 21.

What then is the essence of what we have foregoing found to be the divine instruction upon this subject? It is this.

(1) Our hearts from the beginning are to appreciate the imperfections of our own flesh and to look away to the Lord for the needed assistance to abide in his love.

(2) The exceeding great and precious promises must be studied, earnestly, that we may thus have them constitute in us "the power of God" for good—keeping us in the knowledge of the Lord and, through obedience, in his love.

(3) This knowledge will profit us only as we put it in practice and seek to regulate our minds, our thoughts, our words, and so far as possible all our actions of life, according to this standard which God, through his Word, established before us as an ideal. We are to remember that if we had all knowledge yet had not love, it would profit us nothing, but we are to remember, also, that in the divine arrangement it seems to be impossible that our knowledge should progress much in advance of our obedience to what we already know.

(4) We are to appreciate every evidence which we find, in ourselves or others, of such growth in obedience to the law of God,—the law of love with its connections of justice and mercy and reverence.

(5) We are not to expect the full results of joy in doing the Father's will in the beginning of our experiences, nor are we to feel discouraged if in the beginning the motive be, to a considerable extent, duty-love instead of a love for principles. We are to seek at the Lord's hand further blessing and further filling of his spirit of love. We are to seek to study and to appreciate the basic principles upon which the Lord governs the universe, and are to seek to bring our hearts into sympathetic accord with that law and principle and spirit of righteousness. We are to remember that much of our lack of appreciation of the principles of righteousness is due to our ignorance; and we are to expect that as we come to know the Lord and to understand his plan better, the eyes of our understanding will open the wider so that it will be possible for us not only "to comprehend with all saints," but to appreciate with all saints, the principles underlying and constituting the divine law of love.

Thus we may daily and hourly keep ourselves in the Lord's love by obedience to, and a growing love for, the principles of righteousness. And we are to rejoice in every experience in life,—its trials, difficulties, sorrows, disappointments, etc., no less than in its pleasures, if by any or all of these means the Lord shall instruct us and give us clearer insight into our own deficiencies, and a still clearer insight into that perfect law of liberty and love which he has established, and to which he requires our full and loyal heart-submission.

# GOD'S SUPERVISION OF HIS PEOPLE AND HIS MESSAGE

ACTS 16:6-15.—JUNE 15.

"*Thou shalt be his witness unto all men.*"—Acts 22:15.

For his second missionary tour Paul chose Silas for a companion. The original plan was that he and Barnabas should go together again, but they disagreed respecting the suitability of Mark to be their companion. The result was a division of the work, Barnabas taking Mark, and revisiting the brethren in the Island of Cyprus, while Paul went overland to the churches of Galatia, probably visiting en route his home city of Tarsus. Apparently Silas, whose home was at Jerusalem, found it necessary to go there to close up his affairs, before starting on the tour, and joined Paul later in Asia Minor. This inference is based upon the fact that Luke, the historian, says "he" instead of "they," at the beginning of Paul's journey; then uses the word "they" after Paul had been joined by Silas and Timothy at Lystra, and finally uses the word "we" when he would include himself;—Luke probably joining the company at Troas.

The apostle's journeys amongst the churches of Asia Minor, planted in his previous tour, was for the purpose of their encouragement, strengthening, advancement in knowledge and incitement to growth in grace. Doubtless also the Apostle experienced refreshment from contact with these fruits of his labor. At Lystra he found that the grace of God and the knowledge of the Gospel had reached a considerable development in a young man, probably about twenty-one years of age, named Timothy, whose father had been a Greek and his mother a Jewess,—the latter at this time, according to the Greek text, apparently a widow.

Although devoutly raised, Timothy had never been circumcised according to Jewish regulations, and when it was determined that he should accompany Paul in his missionary work the latter caused him to be circumcised. To some this has seemed strangely inconsistent, in view of the fact that the Apostle at the same time was calling to the attention of the Christian brethren wherever he went the decision of the Council of Apostles at Jerusalem—to the effect that circumcision was not necessary to Christian brotherhood. We are reminded also that the Apostle would not consent to the circumcision of Titus, who was a Gentile. (Gal. 2:3) In view of these things, why did he countenance the circumcision of Timothy? We answer that, properly understood, the Apostle's conduct was thoroughly consistent; circumcision was no part of the Mosaic law, but was instituted with Abraham centuries previous, and was intended as a mark or sign upon all the children of Abraham. The council at Jerusalem did not decide that no Jew must be circumcised thenceforth; but it did decide that circumcision should not be considered *necessary* to a Christian. The Apostle Paul's own argument on this subject is most specific: he says, "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."—Gal. 5:6.

The thought is that, being children of Abraham, according to the flesh, is not sufficient to make us new creatures in Christ Jesus; and therefore circumcision of the flesh will not accomplish this. As the new creature is received of God as a member of the body of Christ through a living faith, he must as a new creature have the circumcision of the heart, in order to be a Spiritual Israelite, whether he was previously a Jew or a Gentile. Circumcision of the heart signifies a *cutting off*—a separation from the flesh, its aims, hopes, desires, etc. We see, then, that there could be no objection to the circumcision of Timothy—it would neither help nor hinder him spiritually,—if done with the clear understanding that it was only a figure, and not the real circumcision which constituted Timothy a member of the body of Christ, the church. Timothy's mother being a Jew, he was a Jew,—even tho his father had been a Greek. And this fact becoming known to Jews in general with whom in traveling they would come in contact, inquiry might be made as to whether or not he had been circumcised. If the answer were No, the implication would be that he had never been a good Jew but a renegade. If the answer were Yes, it would remove this obstacle and grant him correspondingly greater influence with them—a closer access to their hearts.

If there was one thing more than another characteristic of the Apostle Paul it was his honesty, his candor; and it is necessary that we should see his conduct in respect to Timothy and Titus in the proper light, in order to do him justice; in order also to counteract a compromise spirit in some who consider that Paul's course in this matter justifies them in duplicity and compromising. It was in this perfectly legitimate way that Paul meant, "Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews." (1 Cor. 9:20) That he had no thought of compromising the truth in any degree, is evident from his withstanding of Peter on one occasion, when the latter to some extent dissembled in dealing with Jew and

Gentile believers. (Gal. 2:11) This is manifest also in his letter to the Galatians, in which he most positively declares to those who had been Gentiles, that to them circumcision was not an optional matter as with the Jew; but that if they should become circumcised it would imply that they were not trusting wholly to the merit of Christ's sacrifice for their acceptance with God, their salvation; but were trusting partially to laws and ceremonies. His words to them are, "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. . . . Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law: ye are fallen from *grace*." (Gal. 5:2-4) Let us likewise clearly distinguish between concessions in respect to forms, dress, ceremony, etc., which may properly be made to the prejudice or ignorance of those about us, and concessions of principles, which are not permissible to anyone under any circumstances.

The journey through Galatia and Phrygia having been accomplished, the next question was respecting future labors,—other fields. The Apostle's intention was to "go into [lesser] Asia"—the region in which subsequently the seven churches of Asia were located. But for some reason this was not the Lord's plan at this time; and so we read that they were prevented or forbidden (whichever way the word might be translated) to preach the Word there. We are neither informed why nor how. The Lord possibly had some other agent or better means or more favorable time for sending the word of his grace into that quarter, as well as some other work for Paul and his company. As soon as the missionaries discerned the Lord's leading in this respect they turned their attention northward, to go into the province of Bythynia; but again the Lord's spirit, power, influence, hindered their proposed plans. So they passed onward to the coast—to Troas—doubtless wondering at the Lord's providences, and speculating as to whether or not this meant that their work for the present was accomplished, and that they should return homeward. It was at this juncture that the Lord instructed them respecting their journey, by means of a vision or dream in which Paul saw a man dressed in the garb of Macedonia, standing before him, and beseeching him, saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us!"

In these verses we have three positive, distinct statements, showing the Lord's supervision of his cause and of his servants. And when we remember that our God changes not, that he is the same yesterday, today and forever, it gives us assurance that he is still careful and interested as ever in his work, and in the affairs of all his servants. It gives us assurance that the harvest work in the end of this age is not going haphazard, as it extends hither and thither from one to another, by letter, by tract, by book, by word, to the uttermost parts of the earth. What a comfort there is for the Lord's people in this. How completely overwhelmed we would be if we were to lose sight of this fact, and feel the weight and burden of the responsibility of the work pressing us down! In proportion as we are able to exercise faith, trust in the Lord in regard to the work, in that same proportion are we enabled to joy in the Lord and to possess the peace of God which passeth all understanding;—and to have it ruling in our hearts, controlling our lives and keeping us balanced, not only regarding the things of this present time, but also concerning the glorious outcome,—things to come.

This faith is largely a matter of education, too; for instance, as we observe the Lord's providential care, as taught us in this lesson and other lessons from his Word, we are more and more enabled to apply the same care and the same promises to ourselves. Nothing will calm our fears more than this, and enable us to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might; and in our confidence that he will ultimately bring off his work victorious. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." "Lord, increase our faith." The Apostle's confidence in the Lord's supervision of his work enabled him to read the lessons of his time, and to act accordingly with full faith respecting the results. The Lord could have directed him otherwise, and could direct us also otherwise than as he does—could speak to us audibly, if he chose. We are, therefore, to presume that it is for some wise purpose as concerns the development of our faith that he requires his followers to walk by faith,—not by sight and sound.

As soon as the Lord's guidance was recognized no time was lost, and matters in general seemed to co-operate for the journey of the missionaries into Macedonia. They went direct to Philippi the principal city in that vicinity. Apparently they found no Jewish synagogue there, but outside the place they found a spot on the river bank where services were customarily held. This place is supposed to have been a temporary shed,