

The Herald of Christ's Kingdom

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LOVE, THE SUM OF ALL GRACES

*"And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three;
but the greatest of these is love." -- 1 Cor. 13:13*

IT IS of no little significance that Jesus, as He was about to be parted from His disciples said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." The suggestion that they should exercise love one toward another was not a new thought, for the Master previously in various ways impressed this lesson. He had declared that the entire law of God to men is fulfilled in love -- toward God and toward men. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy being, and with all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Since, then, "love is the fulfilling of the law," and "the bond of perfectness," without which no other grace of character would be truly beautiful, we do not marvel to find the statement in the Scriptures, that, "God is love"; and again, that, "he that loveth not, knoweth not God."

It has been truly said that next to the Great Teacher's Sermon on the Mount is St. Paul's glorious hymn to Christian love, as recorded in 1 Cor. 13. Both discourses teach the one lesson; but they approach it from different standpoints. As pupils in the school of Christ, we must recognize that all the instructions of the Divine Word and providence are intended to develop our hearts and influence our conduct in harmony with the lines of love. Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God" -- that God who is love. Surely the Master had reference to knowing God in the sense of personal acquaintance and an appreciation of His character; and no one can have this knowledge except as he receives, partakes of, the Spirit of God, the spirit of holiness, the spirit of love. Nor is this spirit of holiness and love acquired instantly; it is a growth and its development is the chief theme and business of all who hope to know God in the complete sense, which will be rewarded with life eternal.

After God's **great provision** of the sacrificial Lamb, and the ransom of all mankind secured by Him, ail of the various steps for our deliverance from sin and death have been along the line of developing in us the character of love, the character of God; which according to the Divine standard alone will make us acceptable before the Father and bring to us this grace of everlasting life. Oh how important then, that we should be "taught-of God" and develop this, His character. "Learn of Me," said our dear Redeemer; and well we may, for He is the express image of the Father's glorious character of love. And "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ [the Father's Holy Spirit, love] he is none of His."

Godlikeness Sadly Effaced

To begin with, any who are chosen from the human race in its present condition are, from one standpoint, very poor material, out of which to form likenesses of God's dear Son. (Rom. 8:29.) We were children of wrath even as others, the original godlikeness possessed by the first man before he

transgressed having been sadly effaced during the six thousand years intervening. Hence, instead of finding ourselves in the Divine likeness of love, we have been !torn very much misshapen in iniquity, to such a degree that instead of love being the natural ruling principle in our characters, it is in many instances almost entirely obliterated; and what remains is largely contaminated with evil, self-love and sin-love and carnal love; perversions which are in direct antagonism with the holy, unselfish love which is the essence of the Divine character.

The work of Divine grace for humanity during the coming Age, will be to reveal to all men the gracious character of God and to transform all who are willing, from the depravity of sin to the perfection of character -- love, making mankind once more images of God It will not only transform their wills, but it will also be accompanied by a physical transformation which will remove from them all the blemishes of sin, and all hereditary inclinations thereto, and leave them in the likeness of God, with a recollection of the undesirableness of sin and its evil consequences.

The work of grace for the Church during this Gospel Age is to transform our perverted characters and reestablish them in the Divine character, love. Whoever fails of attaining this, fails of attaining the will of God concerning him; and must necessarily fail of winning the prize set before us in the Gospel.

But since our transformation of mind or will is not accompanied by a physical transformation or restitution, it follows that so long as we are in the flesh, we shall be obliged to contend against its inherited weaknesses and dispositions to. selfishness and sin. But this sharp and continual conflict not only selects a special overcoming class but serves to develop the desired character more quickly than will the more easy processes of the coming Age. In consequence, while it will require nearly a thousand years for the world's perfecting, the perfecting of the saints in character may be accomplished in a few years; under the special, sharp discipline and the special course of instruction designed for the "little flock." But whether in few years or many years, and whether with little or, much. friction of adversity, the transformation and polishing of character must be accomplished. This love-likeness of our wills to the will of God is the end to be sought, if we would finish our course with joy, and with good hopes for the eternal glory.

Gifts in the Early Church

In the early Church God indicated in a miraculous manner His acceptance of those who consecrated themselves as followers of Christ, by the bestowal of what were termed "gifts of the Spirit." A particular account of these is given in 1 Cor. 12. The Apostle indicates that some enjoyed several of these gifts, remarking concerning himself that he had more than any of them. Not unnaturally the recipients of these gifts, while feeling thankful for such a recognition from heaven, realized that some gifts were more valuable than others; and the Apostle confirms this view and urges that they seek to use the highest and noblest gifts where several were possessed. And perceiving that the Church was likely to consider that the possession of these gifts indicated such a measure of Divine favor as would imply that they were overcomers and would ultimately gain the prize of their high calling, the Apostle took this opportunity, while discussing the gifts, to point out that their possession implied far less of Divine favor than the recipients had supposed. To this end he points out that these outward gifts or tongues, miracles, healings, etc.,

were necessarily and properly divided between the various members of the Church for their mutual welfare, and to draw them and hold them together, making them mutually dependent upon one another. This being the case, all could not have the same gifts; but as he points out, God has divided these and set or established the various members and gifts in the Body as it hath pleased Him. Yet, it is proper that all should recognize the difference in the gifts, and each covet or desire earnestly to have and to use in the Divine service the best gifts that God has been pleased to entrust to his stewardship. And then, the Apostle adds, "yet show I unto you a more excellent way."

The More Excellent Way

This more excellent way is that, instead of seeking and striving for the "gifts," which were solely at God's disposal, they should seek for another kind of "gifts," otherwise called "fruits" of the same Spirit; namely Faith, Hope, and Love. These gifts are termed "fruits of the Spirit," because, unlike the others, they grow gradually, and are not given miraculously. However humble a miraculous gift any member of the Church might have, there would be nothing to hinder him from growing the largest "fruits of the Spirit" by careful attention to the cultivation of his heart. If the chief "gifts" were not open to all, the greater and more precious "fruits" were open to all; and to desire and cultivate these is much more excellent than to strive after miraculous gifts or talents which God has not been pleased of His own volition to bestow.

Proceeding along this line, the Apostle calls attention to the fact that any one, or even all, of the miraculous "gifts" might be possessed, and yet the recipient be far from the condition of heart which would be fit for the Kingdom. Concerning this another has beautifully observed that "Without it [love] a man may speak with human, aye, and even angelic tongues, and yet have become but as booming gong or clanging cymbal: Without it, whatever be his unction, or insight, or knowledge, or mountain-moving faith, a man is nothing. Without it he may dole away all his possessions, and give his body to be burned, yet is profited nothing. Then follows that description of love, which should be written in letters of gold on every Christian's heart -- its patience, its kindness; its freedom from envy, vaunting self-assertion, inflated arrogance, vulgar indecorum; its superiority to self-seeking; its calm control of temper; its oblivion of wrong; its absence of joy at the wrongs of others; its sympathy with the truth; its gracious tolerance; its trustfulness; its hope; its endurance. Preaching and tongues and knowledge are but partial, and shall be done away when the perfect has come; but love is a flower whose petals never fall off. Those are but as the lisplings and emotions and reasonings of a child; but this belongs to the perfect manhood, when we shall see God, not as in the dim reflection of a mirror, but face to face, and know Him, not in part, but fully, even as now we are fully known. Faith, and hope, and love, are all three, not transient gifts, but abiding graces but the greatest of these -- the greatest because it is the root of the other two; the greatest because they are for ourselves; but love is for others; the greatest because neither in faith nor in hope is the entire and present fruition of heaven, but only in the transcendent and illimitable blessedness of 'faith working by love'; the greatest because faith and hope are human, but love is essentially Divine -- the greatest of these is love."

Blessed Fruitage of the Spirit

To the foregoing all can well agree; surely the quality which is necessary, as a basis of character, which would make any service acceptable to God or cause it to be appreciated or esteemed by Him, is love. If love be not the motive power, the greatest zeal and richest rhetoric and eloquence on behalf of God or on behalf of righteousness, would pass for nothing in God's estimation, and bring us no reward from Him. If love be lacking, great ability as an expounder of mysteries, and much study and knowledge would pass for nothing in God's esteem. Even a faith that could cure all manner of diseases, or, to use our Lord's illustration of the largest degree of faith of this kind, a mountain-moving faith (Matt. 21:21) would count for nothing, if, deep in our hearts as the basis therefor, God could not see love, for Himself and for our fellow creatures. Even the giving of all one's possessions to feed the poor, as charity, would count for naught except the moving cause were love. And even to be a martyr, and to be burned at the stake in the name of Christ, would pass for naught except in the recesses of the heart, God could see that the moving consideration to the suffering was love. Because, all of these things, the acquisition of knowledge, the dispensing of it with eloquence, the exercise of mountain-moving faith, and the giving of all one's goods to the poor, and his own martyrdom, might be done from selfish motives -- to be seen of men, to be highly esteemed by men, for ostentation, for pride, or because of a combative disposition. For this cause the Apostle exhorted the Church to seek for this inestimable fruitage of the Spirit, love; so that whatever gifts they might possess, either natural or miraculous, might be exercised in a manner that would be a blessing to their fellows and acceptable to God, and bring the users the great reward -- eternal life.

Love as a Remedy in the Church

What then is love, this wonderful quality without which nothing is acceptable in the sight of God? The Apostle does not attempt to define love, but contents, himself in giving us a description of some of its manifestations. Where love is lacking results are more or less evil; where love is present the results differ according to the degree of love, and are proportionately good. All will acknowledge that there are sad and unhappy conditions existing today amongst professing brethren in various parts of the world: there are many divisions and factions of brethren; there are differences of viewpoint and conflict of teaching and understanding with regard to one doctrine or another. Instead of the holy spirit of love entering in and correcting this situation, another spirit has entered in to a large extent, and the love of Christ seems often to exist in but small measure. A larger amount of this love described by St. Paul would undoubtedly remedy the entire situation. If the brethren possessed the love of Christ in its fullness, there would be the drawing together and the uniting in the bonds of unity, instead of the disposition to separate and go apart.

Another, in attempting to define love, has said that the various elements that go to make up this wonderful quality are such as "we hear about every day, that they are things which can be practiced by every man in every place in life." But we can scarcely concur in this statement; rather, to the contrary, we must contend that these graces as a whole cannot belong to the natural fallen man. He may indeed put on some of the gentleness, some of the humility, some of the courtesy, some of the patience, some of the kindness; as men may attach grapes to thorn-bushes and figs to thistles; but with the natural man these graces are wholly put on, and not the outgrowth of the inward grace, the Holy Spirit, love; not an evidence of relationship to God. Where

the imitator has not been begotten again, by the Word and Spirit of Truth, his imitation of certain outward features of love will not constitute him a son of God nor bring to him the rewards and blessings of sonship to which there is but one door -- Christ Jesus.

Outward Manifestations of Love not Sufficient

In the Christian, an outward manifestation of patience, meekness, etc., is not sufficient either in God's sight or in his own sight. These graces of the Spirit must be produced by the spirit of love, filling and expanding within his own heart. But in civilized countries many of these graces of the Spirit are recognized by the unregenerate, and are imitated as marks of good breeding; and in many cases they are successfully worn as a cloak or mask, covering hearts and sentiments quite antagonistic to the holy spirit of love.

The putting on of the outward forms of love does however mitigate the evils and distress and friction incident to the fall, even in "the natural man," even when these graces are merely simulated with more or less of hypocrisy and deception as to the real selfishness of the uncircumcised heart. But trying times occasionally show how thin is the polished veneer of politeness and gentleness which covers selfish and stony hearts. We cannot expect more of a love-veneered heart-even the strong glue of chivalry will not hold the veneer under some circumstances. And the time may not be far distant when the great crisis of which the Prophets have spoken will make manifest to the whole world that much of the politeness and gentleness of our day is only skin deep, and is not from the heart, the fruitage of the holy spirit of love. In that great crisis, as the Scriptures show, every man's hand will be against his neighbor. In that Day of Vengeance the masks of formal politeness will be discarded, and the world for a short time will get such a glimpse of its own hideous selfishness as will help prepare it for Millennial lessons in love and its graces, to be given them by the great Immanuel.

The Scriptures inform us that in our fallen state love is foreign to our natures, and must be introduced into them by the power of God; saying, "Not that we [first] loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And, learning of this, God's love, and truly believing and appreciating it, "the love of Christ constraineth us [to love]." We are "begotten by the Word of truth," the Message of God's love toward us in the forgiveness of our sins, and His call to us to return to His favor and likeness, and His provision of the helps by the way that we might become copies of His dear Son.

Love's Transforming Power

The measure of our appreciation of Divine love will be the measure of our zeal in conforming our characters to the Divine pattern. A naturally rough, uncouth, depraved disposition may require a long time, after the grace of Divine love enters the heart, before that grace is manifest in all the words and thoughts and acts of the outward man. Others, on the contrary, of more gentle birth and cultured training, may without the grace of God within have many of the outward refinements. None but He who readeth the heart is competent therefore to judge as to who have and who have not received this grace, and of the degree of its development in their hearts: but each one may judge for himself, and each one begotten by this holy spirit, love, should seek to let its light so shine out, through all the avenues of communication with his fellow

creatures, as to glorify our Father in heaven and "show forth the glories of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light."

The love of Christ, the Apostle assures us, is patient with the weaknesses and imperfections of those who give any evidence of good intentions. More than this, it is patient even with those who are out of the way, and who oppose themselves to righteousness, realizing that the whole world is more or less under the influence of the great Adversary who, as the Apostle declares, blinds the minds of the masses. This manifestation of love was very prominent in our Lord Jesus: how patient was He with His opponents? Let us heed the Apostle's words: "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied [in well doing and patience] and faint in your minds." -- Heb. 12:3.

Again, love is kind in its methods. It not only seeks to do good to others, but seeks to do it in the kindest possible manner. And who has not discovered that the manner and tone have much to do with every affair of life. In proportion as the love of Christ is attained, the effort of the heart will be to have every word and act, like the thought which prompts them, full of kindness. It is well to remember the motto of the old Quaker, "I shall pass through this world but once. Any good thing, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer it, nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

Love is Opposed to Envy and Pride

It is easy to recognize further, how love is generous and has no place for envy, which, on the contrary, springs from a perverted nature -- from selfishness. But love rejoices with them that rejoice, in the prosperity of every good work and word, and in the advancement in Christian grace and in the Divine service of all who are actuated by the Divine Spirit.

The disposition to be lifted up in pride is contrary to the love of God which, "vaunteth not itself." It does not sound a trumpet before it. Its good deeds are not done to be seen of men, but would be done just the same if no one saw -or knew but God only. It is neither boastful of its knowledge, nor of its graces, but in humility acknowledges that every good and perfect gift cometh from the Father; and it makes return for every mercy to Him. Some one has truly said that, "Love saves a man from making a fool of himself by consequential conduct, and by thrusting himself into positions which betray his incompetence."

St. Paul tells us further that the love that is of God, "doth not behave itself unseemly." Pride is the root out of which grows most of the unseemly conduct and boorishness so common to those who think themselves somebody, either intellectually or financially. The love from above, on the contrary, develops courteousness along with humility. A thoughtful man has said, "Politeness has been defined as love in trifles. Courtesy is said to be love in little things. The one secret of politeness is to love. A gentleman is one who does things gently, with love."

Love is Generous and Patient

Surely the love of God is unselfish -- "seeketh not her own" interests, exclusively. Nothing in this signifies that one should neglect the duty of caring for and providing for those dependent upon him by ties of nature, that he may do good to others. In every sense, "Love begins at home." The proper thought, as we gather it, is that the men and women possessed of the spirit of the true love, would not think exclusively of their own interests in any of the affairs of life. In bargaining they would have an interest also in the welfare of the one from whom they bought or to whom they sold. They would not wish to take advantage of a neighbor, but sympathetically and generously would wish to "live and let live." Put into exercise, this element of love would have a great influence upon all the affairs of life, inside as well as outside the home and family.

Logically, it is contrary to love's disposition to be "easily provoked" to anger. Among the evils abounding and very common today, is this one of ill-temper, fretfulness, bad humor, touchiness, quickness to take offense. Yet, to whatever extent this disposition is fostered, or willingly harbored, or not fought against, it becomes an evidence of a deficiency and imperfection of our development in the holy spirit of our Father, and of the deficiency of our likeness to our Lord Jesus, Our Pattern. Very few of the evidences of a wrong spirit receive as much kindness and as many excuses for their continuance as does this one. But notwithstanding the fact that all are affected by natural depravity, heredity and nervous disorders, the filling of the heart with the holy spirit of God, the spirit of love, should serve to offset the disposition to evil in the flesh and cause us to wage a good warfare against it. The love of God as it is possessed in increasing measure will cause the true disciple to exercise deep brotherly love, sympathy, and compassion toward all other members of the Body of Christ.

Since the love of God wishes only good for others, it "thinketh no, evil." It seeks to interpret the conduct of others charitably. If pure and good intentioned itself, it prefers and so far as possible endeavors to view the words and conduct of others from the same standpoint. It does not treasure up animosities and suspicions, nor manufacture a chain of circumstantial proofs of evil intentions out of trivial affairs. Some one has wisely remarked that "faults are thick where love is thin." Love makes all possible allowance for errors of judgment, rather than to impugn the motives of the heart.

Modern Balaams in the Church

The love which is from above "rejoiceth not in iniquity." It is grieved by evils wherever encountered, sympathizes with all who fall into evil, or who are beset by temptations. In this respect love prompts to an opposite course of action from that of Balaam, who "loved the reward of iniquity." Balaam, it will be remembered, feared the Lord, and as His Prophet could not think of doing otherwise than according to the strict letter of the Lord's injunction; but he did not have the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of love; and hence, when a reward was offered him if he would curse Israel, he was willing (in order to secure the reward) to conform to the evil proposition in spirit, in intention, while outwardly refraining from saying aught except as the Lord indicated. So, there are some amongst Christians who have a respect for the letter of the Divine Word through fear, but who lack the holy spirit of love, and who by reason of a perverted love for wealth, etc., are willing to engage in various

practices which come as near to the injury of the Lord's cause as is possible, without openly opposing Him. Some of these Balaams are evidently in the ministry of Present Truth and for the sake of honor and the maintenance of their positions; and for the friendship of prominent Balaks, are willing to preach that which they do not really believe, and engage in practices which they do not endorse, and in various ways to cast stumbling blocks before spiritual Israel. (Num. 22:7; 31:16; Rev. 2:14.) The Apostle mentions these Balaams as being specially represented by false teachers in the professing Church. -- 2 Pet. 2:15; Jude 11.

Every one who is seeking to develop in his heart the Holy Spirit, perfect love, should guard carefully this point of sincerity of motive as well as uprightness of conduct. The least suggestion of rejoicing at the fall of any person or thing that in any degree- represents righteousness and goodness, is to be deplored and overcome. Perfect love rejoiceth not in iniquity under any circumstances or conditions, and would have no sympathy but only sorrow in the fall of another, even if it should mean his own advancement.

Delights in the Truth and Bears All Things

How reasonable it, is that love "rejoiceth in the truth"! However profitable error might be, love could take no part in it, and could not desire the reward of evil. But it does take pleasure in the truth -- truth upon every subject, and especially in the truth of Divine revelation; however unpopular the truth may be; however much persecution its advocacy may involve; however much it may cause the loss of the friendship of this world and of those who are blinded by the god of this world. The spirit of love has such an affinity for the truth that it rejoices to share loss, persecution, distress or whatever may come against the truth and its servants. In the Lord's estimate it is all the same whether we are ashamed of Him or ashamed of His Word, and of all such He declares that He will be ashamed when He comes to be glorified in His saints.

Surely the love of Christ "beareth all things." It is both willing and able to endure for the cause of God -- reproaches, reproofs, insults, losses, misrepresentations and even death. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith" -- the very-center and life of which faith is the holy spirit of love to the Lord and to their that are His, and sympathetically for the world. The love of God can bear up tinder all circumstances and by God's grace bring us off "conquerors and more than conquerors" through Him who loved us.

Sincere love "believeth all things." It is not suspicious, but on the contrary, disposed to be trustful. It acts on the principle that it is better if necessary to be deceived a hundred times, than to go through life soured by a distrustful, suspicious mind-far better than to wrongly accuse or suspect even one person unjustly. This is the merciful disposition as applied to thoughts, and of it the Master said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." The unmerciful, evil-thinking mind is father to unmerciful conduct toward others.

God's love in us affects our future outlook, says the Apostle: Love "hopeth all things." It is not easily discouraged. This is the secret of love's perseverance; having learned of God, and having become a partaker of His spirit of holiness, it trusts in Him and hopes undismayed for the fulfillment of His gracious Covenant, however dark the immediate surroundings. This hopeful element of love is one of the striking features in the perseverance of

the saints, enabling them to endure hardness as good soldiers. Its hopeful quality hinders it from being easily offended, or easily stopped in the work of the Lord. Where others would be discouraged and put to flight, the spirit of love gives endurance, that we may war a good warfare, and please the Captain of our salvation. Love's hopefulness knows no despair, for its anchorage enters into that which is within the veil and is firmly fastened to the Rock of Ages.

Faith, Hope, and Love Abide Forever

Not only is love the greatest of all the graces, and really, as we have seen, the sum of them all in combination and unification, but it is the most lasting grace: love never faileth -- will never cease; and he who has this character of love will never fail, will never cease: It is for such that eternal life has been provided in the Divine Plan.

Now bear in mind the Apostle's argument to the Corinthian friends: (1) that the gifts of miracles, tongues, etc., bestowed upon them by the Spirit, were divided amongst them according to the talent or Divine wisdom, and were not the results of their own efforts; (2) that he is pointing out to them a grace much more excellent than those "gifts," something that God will be pleased to give to each one of them; a grace of more value than any of the "gifts" -- of much more value than all of them together; a grace that might properly be termed a fruitage of the Spirit -- love. And the fact is that some possessed of few talents have proportionately less to contend against while seeking to cultivate the all-important love.

Having described this wonderful and necessary element of character in its perfection, the Apostle comes back and contrasts it with those "gifts" which they so highly appreciated and coveted, and shows that the chiefest of those "gifts" is inferior to love. The gift of prophecy he declares will fail, will cease because the necessity for prophecy would cease: the miraculous power of speaking with unknown tongues would cease for the same reason: the knowledge of mysteries and the ability to expound the deep things of God will gradually vanish away, as the perfect light gradually comes to all men; for when the full, clear light shall have come there will be nothing hidden, all shall be revealed, and all will be able to see; hence the gifts of ability to understand mysteries of the Divine Plan and to expound them to others, although two of the greatest of the gifts, will ultimately vanish in the perfect light; but love will never fail. It is the greatest thing in this world, and it will continue the greatest thing in the world to come; for God is love; and all who would enjoy His favor and its reward, eternal life, must possess this, His holy character.

Pausing, the Apostle remarks how little we all know in the present time; even those who have the largest amount of knowledge and who can expound the Divine Word and its hidden mysteries, know only in part; they see only obscurely; and while the obscurity will gradually vanish into the perfect light as the Sun of Righteousness arises, yet we will, only know in part until that time, when we shall be "changed"; when imperfection shall give place to perfection.

From Childhood to Maturity in Christ

Looking back to childhood we can see that as we have developed physically and grown in knowledge in earthly matters, and have changed our processes of thought and conduct and language correspondingly; so in spiritual matters we should realize that in the beginning of our Christian way we were but "babes," and we should not be satisfied to remain such, but desire individually to grow up into Christ in all things. And what is true of each individually, is true of the Church collectively. The period of the gifts of tongues and miracles was the period of infancy, childhood; as progress was made, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, certain of those features very necessary and well adapted to the childhood stage passed away, and instead came other experiences, methods and leadings in the truth. Hence, today, the "tongues" are gone, the "prophesying" in the sense of foretelling future events is gone, the "miracles" are gone, etc., after having served their purposes well. But the Lord still continues to provide in the Church "knowledge," even though it be but imperfect knowledge; He still continues to provide methods for evangelizing or spreading the news of the truth to the unbelieving; He still provides teachers and helps in the Church. But these are not usually provided miraculously, as at first, but naturally and by the addition of the Lord's blessing to natural qualifications. But all these, will cease so far as the Church is concerned when her course is finished; "when that which is perfect is come," she will have no further need of these imperfect helps.

Three gifts of the Spirit, of the kind developed as fruits, will survive; and these are to be earnestly sought and cultivated: they are Faith, Hope and Love: but the greatest, the chiefest, of these is Love. Faith and Hope, although they are two of the most necessary qualities for the present time, in aiding us in making our calling and election sure, and two which will never cease to all eternity, will measurably lose their active operations, "when that which is perfect is come"; because in a large degree and in reference to many subjects, sight and knowledge will take the place of Faith and Hope. But *Love* will never fail, never fade, never grow dim. It will be as active and glorious and useful in the life to come as it is now. Indeed, the sum of the future perfect life will be Love.

THE CURSE LIFTED

"And there shall be no curse." -- Rev. 22:3

EVEN though the Scriptures were silent on the subject of the curse, our experience proves that such rests upon our race. The anguish, sorrow, distress, and death which attend us from the cradle to the tomb, all tell us that a curse rests heavily upon us. A curse signifies an opposition, an evil, and is the cause of serious harm and unhappiness -- a bitter punishment. Surely we would be justified in reasoning, that if man were in full harmony with his Creator, something much better than he has, would be his portion. And looking into the Divine Revelation, this thought is abundantly corroborated. Ever since the representative of our race was tried in Eden, and transgressed God's commandment, the curse of that broken Law has rested upon him and upon all whom he in trial, represented, all the Adamic race. That this is so, we need not stop to prove at length; we merely refer to the many Scriptures

which declare it, and the many others which declare that it will be removed. We find that when man was sinless and in harmony with God, there was no curse, no sorrow, no weary laboring, no pain, nor dying, but joy, peace, life and communion with God. All this distress is included in the term death, because all of these evils surely lead to it. And this curse, death, passed upon all men, in that all had sinned in the person of their representative Adam.

It was God's Law that cursed us. And since the Law is the expression of God's mind, or decision, it was God's curse that was on us. Every law, to be of any force, must contain a penalty or curse for its violation. It is the penalty or curse of God's Law that is causing so much misery and distress in the world, because all are subject to its curse through its violation by Adam. This curse is elsewhere termed by the Apostle an "Enmity," which word has much the same meaning as curse. Enmity signifies an opposition to -- a resentment.

Enmity Between God and Man

Let us look at the subject fairly and fully, for not only has God and His Law a just and righteous opposition and enmity against sinners, but the sinners have since come to have an opposition or enmity toward God. Cast off from communion and fellowship with his Maker, man went headlong into evil, and the more evil he became, the more opposition and enmity he had toward that which is good and holy and right. "The darkness hateth the light," and the darker the hearts of men became, the more enmity they felt toward God.

Now, if God and man ever again come into harmony, and are made at-one, he who makes the atonement must remove entirely this enmity. The enmity of man toward God and His Law can be removed by making known to men the real character of God and of His Law. They will then see and admire the righteousness and justice of both. This work toward the world will be accomplished during the next Age -- the Millennium. The knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth, and all shall know Him. And it is of that time that we read, "There shall be no more curse."

But what will bring about this abolishment of the curse of the Law? What will compensate for man's violation of the Law which brought the curse? Some would contend that the only curse is that opposition which man has against God and His Law, the only enmity, that which man feels in opposition to God and righteousness; but such surely see but one side of the subject, What about God's opposition to the sinner, which drove him from Eden into sorrow, and death? Any theory which fails to recognize this, fails entirely; for there have been some of the race in, all ages who felt no enmity toward God, but desired the blessings of His favor -- Eden, life and joy in His fellowship; yet such never were brought back, to the original condition, and any with whom God designed at all to commune, were made to feel that His enmity, His opposition, His curse as a barrier still separated between them as sinners and Himself as holy. This was shown in various ways, but in none more emphatically than in the sacrifice for sin which each must offer before he could have any communion with God.

In these sacrifices there was remembrance of acknowledgment of sins, and since they were repeated it proved that they never really took away sin (Heb. 10:3, 4), never really removed the curse; but these were typical of a better sacrifice, which God Himself provided in due time, which did once for all and forever, remove the sin, the curse, and the enmity on God's part. -- Heb. 10:5-10.

God's Justice Unalterable

The idea that the enmity is all on man's part, carried to its legitimate end, leads to the very absurd conclusion that man got angry with God and went out of Eden full of enmity; that he would not commune with God, etc., etc.; God remonstrates and pleads with him to return and have His communion and fellowship; man refuses, and turns his back on his Maker. God sends prophets and teachers, but man spurns them. Finally God concluded to make a great sacrifice to men to appease their wrath and to win their love. This theory would have God say: I have been too severe, if I had it to do again I would not be so strict; I would forgive instead of condemn; I would bless instead of curse; My love for you has conquered My justice. Come, now, see what an evidence of My repentance I am willing to give. My Son shall die merely to show and assure you that your sins are pardoned, and that I am anxious to have your good will and esteem. What a God that would be! Both men and angels would have in contempt such Laws and such a Lawgiver.

How different from this is the truth on the subject! Jehovah declares His justice as unalterable as His Love, and that infinite wisdom and power make possible the harmonious operation of both. He assures us that justice is the very foundation of His throne; that the empire of the universe, and the Laws for the government of the same are upheld by justice. "Righteousness and justice are the prop of Thy throne." (Psa. 89:15, Leeser) While justice was reading to Adam the penalty of the broken Law -- The Curse -- Love was telling him that there would be a deliverance. Man might have supposed that God would relent, and not long enforce the penalty; he might have supposed that God's enmity or opposition to sinners expressed by the curse of the Law would be forced aside by His love; but if he did thus imagine, the long years of death's reign must have shattered such hopes, and when finally God declared that He changes not, and will never clear the guilty (Mal. 3:6; Exod. 34:7), such a false expectation might well be extinguished. If God's justice could never yield, how would His love help man? he might well have asked.

The Enmity Destroyed

Infinite Wisdom was equal to the emergency, and God removed the enmity of His own just Law by providing a ransom, a representative or substitute to take man's place before the Law, to suffer the just for the unjust; and thus while He did not destroy that Law which was just and holy and good, Jesus destroyed its enmity or opposition to the Adamic race, by Himself enduring its enmity and curse, as it is written: "He was made a curse [that is, He was cursed or bore the penalty of the curse -- death -- destruction] for us."

Because Jesus was our representative or substitute, (see Webster's definition) therefore the curse belonging to us fell on Him, and the enmity or opposition against us, was reckoned against Him. He was cast off to die as though He were an enemy and out of communion with God, as any enemy, as a sinner, and we recall His dying words, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Yes, "He is our peace, who hath made both [Jew and Gentile] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition; . . . having abolished in His flesh the enmity . . . that He might reconcile both unto God [Jew and Gentile needed to have a work done for them which would make them right before God; not to make God right in their eyes; not to atone for an injustice on God's part, but for unrighteousness on man's part] in one body by the cross -- having slain the enmity [opposition of the Law against both Jew and

Gentile] thereby. . . . For through Him we both have access, by one Spirit unto the Father." -- Eph. 2:14-19.

There was no "access unto the Father" as long as the enmity (opposition) of His just Law barred us out as sinners; but when Jesus became our substitute and suffered the condemnation or enmity for the unjust, absorbed it all, received it in full measure on the cross, He thus abolished destroyed, all claim and enmity of the Law against us on account of Adam's disobedience. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners," and outcasts from the Lord and His communion, but are "made nigh by the blood of Christ."

Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice, not for God, unto men, to appease their enmity or opposition, but unto God, for men, to remove the enmity and curse of God's Law which men because of their sin.

But note, the Law has not been changed: right is still right and wrong is still wrong, and will ever so remain; but mankind has been purchased from under the dominion and curse of the Law. Mankind is reckoned as now belonging to Christ who bought them with His own precious blood. The settlement of the claims of the Law having all been arranged for, the entire control of men is to be delivered to the Lord who bought them. Whatever now shall be done with them, He shall do it. He may do what He will with His own; thenceforth, "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" -- "He is Lord of all." -- John 5:22; Acts 10:36.

God's Original Law in Man's Nature Largely Obliterated

Having delivered mankind from the dominion and curse of the perfect Law, and abolished the legal opposition, the curse of death which was against them, the next work of Messiah is toward men, and not toward God; and for this work He will take to Himself great power and will reign. The object of His reign will be to destroy man's enmity to God and His Law, and to re-engage that Law upon man's conscience. The work of reconciliation toward God for man's sins, was quickly accomplished, for the Lord waited to be gracious, but towards men it will require an Age, the Millennium to accomplish it.

The reason of this is apparent: It will require all of the coming Age to rewrite the Law of God upon the hearts of men. When perfect, before the fall, the Law of God was so thoroughly imprinted in man's nature that no written law upon tables of stone was needed. Man, a moral image of God, had a conscience so delicately adjusted that it would decide instantly what was right and what; was wrong. His difficulty, as we have already seen, was that he did not appreciate the evil or curse which was the penalty of wrong-doing.

But cast off, from the fellowship and communion of God by reason of sin, the Law became more or less obliterated, and instead there sprang up, an enmity or opposition to the Law which they acknowledged as good, but found, themselves less and less able to observe. St. Paul refers to this blotting out of the image and knowledge of God and His Law, saying: "When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain and their foolish heart was darkened . . . and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind." -- Rom. 1 :21., 28

About two thousand years after the fall, and when the original Law was well nigh erased, God selected a small nation, Israel, and made covenants with

them based on their keeping His Law, which because so erased from their hearts, was expressed to them in commandments on tables of stone. But, as God foreknew, the Law in stone, only condemned, for none could render full obedience except with it written in their hearts, as a part of their very being. They must be constitutionally right and just and loving, else they would be constantly warring against themselves and unable to obey. (Rom. 7:20-25.) But that Law served to give them an idea of their need of Divine help, the need of having the penalty paid for them, and then having the Law rewritten in their hearts. -- Gal. 3:23-25.

The Great Consummation When the Kingdom Shall Be Delivered Up

Though Satan and sin have done a terribly degrading work in man, putting darkness and error for light and truth, yet we may still find traces of the original Law in the most degraded of men, the world over. Even barbarian savages have some ideas concerning right and wrong, justice and injustice, however crude they may be. St. Paul testifies to this also, saying of the heathen: "These having not the [written] Law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work [some evidence] of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness." -- Rom. 2:14, 15.

It is because this Law has been so nearly blotted out- of the once perfect human nature, that it will require so long to restore it to perfection. This Law must once more gradually be interwoven into human nature before it will again be an image of God, and at one with Him. When so restored to God's image, all doubts as to what is right and what wrong, and all preference for the wrong, will be at an end. With his whole nature right, the Law of God written in his very constitution, as the law of his being, man will be prepared to do right, not from fear, nor from reward, not because some one would see or some one would not see, but because right is right, the very same motive of righteousness and justice which governs all of our Maker's actions.

Then God and men will be entirely at one, in perfect harmony. Then it will be seen that God's Laws are only blessings, and the only prevention of evil which is a source of misery. When thus harmonized, Christ the Mediator who died to redeem, and who will have reigned to restore men to God, will "deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father." (1 Cor. 15:24.) All enmity and curse will have been destroyed. The requirement of God's Law having been met and settled, man's enmity to the Law will be removed by a restitution to original perfection, the image of God.

In harmony with this is another Scriptural statement: "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God [and the opposition and curse of His violated Law was lifted] by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved [brought back into that condition of perfection and harmony with God and His Law where we will be no longer condemned but approved] by His life," (Rom. 5:10.) This is another brief statement of the same glorious truth by the Apostle. When the work of Christ is fully accomplished, then "there shall be no more curse"; "for the former things [the evil incurred through Adam's transgression] are passed away," (Rev. 22:3; 21:4) put away legally by the "sacrifice of Himself [Christ]"; and put away in fact by His glorious reign. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." For "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us."

ST. PAUL'S LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

*"Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap,
if we faint not." -- Gal. 6:9.*

THE Apostle Paul, on leaving Ephesus after the rioting there, determined to visit Jerusalem again, but first would visit the European churches of Macedonia and Greece. It was while in Macedonia that he is supposed to have written his Second Letter to the Corinthians; and, on this tour, while in Corinth for about three months, he is supposed to have written his Epistle to the Romans. At this time, Nero, aged 21, was Emperor of Rome, and the Apostle Paul was about 56 years of age, in the full prime of his Christian life and experience.

The journey to Jerusalem was made in a trading vessel which was detained at the port of Miletus, about thirty miles distant from Ephesus. The number of days the vessel would be detained, changing cargo, etc., was uncertain; hence, the Apostle, instead of going to Ephesus, sent word to the elders of the Church there, that they might come to him in Miletus, that thus he might have as long as possible with them; without missing his vessel when it would be ready to start. The elders came, and the sacred record contained in chapter 20, of the Acts, gives us the Apostle's address to them. They may have stayed several days in his company, and probably he said much more, but the final words evidently, in the mind of Luke, who chronicled them, were an epitome of the entire address, which is generally esteemed as both eloquent and touching. It is an address from a general overseer to local overseers, and to be appreciated must be viewed from this standpoint.

"Take heed unto yourselves": well did the Apostle realize that those who do not keep guard over their own hearts cannot faithfully serve the interests of the Church in general. Piety, as well as charity, should begin at home. The Apostle states the grounds for so earnest an exhortation: (1) The Church which they were overseeing and feeding was to be recognized as God's Church, "purchased with the blood of His own [Son]." That which God so highly valued, and purchased at so great a price, is to be esteemed very precious by all who would be His servants and its servants. (2) Because dangers and foes would arise; and while these could not come without Divine permission, it is a part of the Divine will that they shall serve as tests of faith and loyalty of the entire flock, including the elders, overseers, pastors. The energy necessary to such resistance of evil would tend to develop character which God desires each member of His flock to have. God would not stiffer them to be tempted above that they were able, but would with every temptation, or trial, provide a way of escape; but He would have them learn to trust Him, to exercise faith, obedience, vigilance and resistance of evil.

Men of Your Own Selves Shall Arise

The Apostle evidently knew by inspiration of some kind, that he would never see these dear brethren again, that his mission in this field was at a close, and as a true under-shepherd he was looking out for the interests of the flock: He knew, probably from the prophecy of Daniel, that a great falling away was to come; that the Adversary was to be permitted to develop a great antichrist system, as, he subsequently wrote to the Church at Thessalonica; and he wished the local overseers to realize the responsibility of their position, and

to be vigilant. "Grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock"; ambitious for power, influence, etc., they would not hesitate to barter the interests of the flock for their own advancement. Another source of danger would be from within, "of your own selves" some would rise up, be puffed up with ambition, to have followers, adherents, and would lead them into false doctrines, to the injury of themselves and those misled by them. The history of the Church shows that the Apostle's warning was most timely, from that day to the present..

The knowledge of these things was to .keep them on guard continually, not only as against wolves from without, abut against the rising of ambitious ones amongst their own number, not necessarily watching each other merely, but rather each specially watching and guarding his own heart against the insidious attacks of the Adversary along the lines indicated, too great self-esteem or desire to be great. The Apostle, we may be sure, was glad to be able to point .to his own course in their midst, as an example of proper humility of spirit, and of zeal for the interests of the flock. "Remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn [admonish] every one, night and day with tears." The secret of the Apostle's zeal lay, evidently, in his appreciation of the fact that he was God's ambassador, and that the work .of the Lord in which he was privileged to be a coworker, is a most important one, relating first to the salvation and perfecting of the saints, the elect, and ultimately through them to the blessing of all the families of the earth. Had the Apostle, during those three years, been neglecting the spiritual interests of the flock, he could not have made such an address as this to the elders.

At the close of the conference, when we may suppose the sailing of the vessel was announced, the Apostle knelt with the brethren from Ephesus, in prayer, the tenor of which may well be imagined. Then the parting took place, and doubtless the dear brethren began to realize more fully than they had ever done before what great blessings God had bestowed upon them through the Apostle's ministries; and the thought that they should never see him again filled them with sadness, and they wept as they accompanied him to the ship.

Blessed Eternity when Partings are No More

Doubtless the Apostle consoled them with the reflection that the time of partings would soon be over and the blessed eternity of union and fellowship soon begin, when they would meet not only one another, but above all meet the Redeemer Himself and all the faithful in Christ Jesus. So our Lord also expressed Himself on this matter, "a little while." The eighteen centuries intervening would have seemed a long while had any lived from then till now, but since their "sleep" would be an unconscious interval, it was well that God kindly veiled their eyes and merely comforted them from His own larger standpoint of "soon," "quickly," "a, little while." But now that the Kingdom is nigh, even at the door, our hearts no longer, cry, How long, O Lord? but, Hallelujah! the day star is risen, the morning is here!

Brotherhood in Christ is the closest of all relationships, and many incidents in the Apostle's journey from Ephesus to Jerusalem illustrate this brotherhood relationship most beautifully. The first verse of chapter 21 says, "After we were gotten from them," etc., the words "gotten from" signifying; torn ourselves away, as though the hearts of all were so thoroughly, united that the separation meant the breaking of very tender ties. And so we find it to be today, with the Lord's similarly consecrated people. They become

attached to each other in a manner that formal creeds and confessions in earthly bundles or denominations, do not bind. Each one who is united to Christ feels a special interest in, and sympathy for, each fellow member, so that, as the Apostle says, if one member rejoice all are glad, and if one member be in trouble or affliction or sorrow all are sympathetically affected. This will be noticeable in proportion as the law of love develops and abounds in each member. The little love in the beginning of Christian character will expand and deepen, filling all the avenues of the heart, and sanctifying them in a pure, unselfish, holy love.

Bonds and Imprisonment Awaited Him

The voyage from Miletus to Patara was probably in a small coasting vessel. At the latter port they found a larger seagoing vessel, on which they made the through journey to Tyre. At the latter place the Apostle and his companions hunted up some believers, whom they previously knew resided there. This is another evidence of affection and interest. Apparently the number of the interested was small, just as today; the twos and threes, sixes and sevens are much more numerous than larger companies. The fewness did not hinder the Apostle from seeking them out, that he might encourage and strengthen them. Rather, we may say that in some respects the appreciation of the fact that the Lord's jewels are not numerous makes them all the more precious. In this little Church were some who evidently had the gift of prophecy, as it was granted in the early Church, foretelling future events, just as with the Prophets of old, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc., except that those of the earlier dispensation spoke evidently in a more public manner; while these latter had messages especially for the Apostle and the Church. The message that came to them was to the effect that the Apostle would be caused to suffer at Jerusalem; would be imprisoned maltreated, etc., and on this account they urged him not to go. The Apostle tells us previously, that the Spirit witnessed in various places that bonds and imprisonment awaited him; but, nevertheless, he understood it to be the Divine will that he should go to Jerusalem, and that, hence, he would not hesitate, knowing that the Lord was able to work out His own good purposes, if he were obedient.

We are not to understand this testimony of these local prophets to be a contradiction of the Apostle's understanding of the same Holy Spirit's leading; the one teaching him that he should go to Jerusalem, the other teaching that he should not go to Jerusalem. We are rather to understand that these prophets merely had from God, a revelation to the effect that St. Paul would suffer violence in the city of the great king, and that on the strength of this information they themselves advised the Apostle not to go. But St. Paul, without disrespect, or in any degree impugning the truthfulness of their message, drew a different lesson from it, understood the Lord's message differently. He saw that this meant a trial of his faith, his zeal, his perseverance, and that for him to yield to these suggestions, through fear, would have been an evidence of his lack of confidence in God, since the Lord had Himself revealed to him that he should go up to Jerusalem.

St. Paul Unmoved by Threats and Fears

Leaving Tyre their vessel soon came to Ptolemais. There were a few friends at Ptolemais, and the day was spent in their company, and probably the partings again were full of expressions of sympathy; and the Caesarea, the Roman capital of Palestine, was reached. Philip the evangelist, one of the seven deacons originally appointed at Jerusalem and who did a good work, it will be remembered, with the Ethiopian eunuch and at Samaria, was at this time apparently making Caesarea his home. We have no definite statement respecting the number of believers at the place, but evidently most of these groups of the Lord's people were few in number.

It was while they tarried in the latter place that Agabus, a brother in the Lord, who had delivered important prophecies of future events, came to Caesarea and finding St. Paul, took his girdle and therewith bound his own feet and hands, and declared that thus St. Paul would be bound and delivered to the Gentiles. This form of prophecy, illustrating by signs, was not uncommon to the Jews. It will be remembered that Isaiah and Jeremiah and others of the Prophets similarly acted out parts of their messages, thus, doubtless, making them more impressive.

This last testimony from Agabus seems to have affected all of St. Paul's companions who, taking a view similar to that taken by others, now joined in a general appeal to the Apostle not to go further on the journey, to give it up, not to run foolishly into danger. His reply shows us how thoroughly convinced he felt that it was the Lord's will, and that his dear friends were conscientious, he does not for a moment dispute. His words are most touching: "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?" Here again we are reminded of the words of the poet

"We share our mutual woes;
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear."

But the Apostle was firm. He had not started on this journey without the full conviction and assurance that it was in the Lord's providence that he should take it; and he was not to be daunted by any of the circumstances that might arise. He well knew that all the powers of darkness would assail him in vain, except as the Lord should permit, and he well knew also that the Lord would permit nothing to occur that would be to his real disadvantage. He would, therefore, go on conscientiously and courageously; and finish the work that the Father had given him to do. He would be sustained by his faith in the Divine supervision of all his affairs, just as our Lord Jesus was, who, we remember, said to Pilate, "Thou couldst have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above." -- John 19:11.

There are few such noble characters as the Apostle's, unmoved by threats or fears, strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, and ready not only to be bound for Christ's sake, but to die, if such should be the arrangement of the Lord's providence on his behalf. Let us each and all emulate this noble example of one who followed so **closely in the** footsteps of **our Lord** and Master. Let us be strong, not only in our consecration, but also in the taking of all the steps that the Lord's providence may lead us to take.

The Character of St. Paul

The summing up of the life of St. Paul by another, who has evidently given it much careful reflection, will be found very appropriate here

"St. Paul, in his natural character, before his conversion, resembles Bonaparte more than any other man -- I mean both in his intellectual development and energy of will. He had the same inflexibility of purpose, the utter indifference to human suffering when he had once determined on his course, the same tireless, unconquerable resolution; the same fearlessness both of man's power and opinions, and that calm self-reliance and mysterious control over others. But the point of greatest resemblance is in the union of a strong, correct judgment, with rapidity of thought and sudden impulse. They thought quicker, yet better than other men. The power, too, they possessed was all practical power. There are many men of strong minds, whose forces nevertheless waste in reflections, or in theories of others to act upon. Their thought may work out into language, but not into action: They will plan better than they perform. But these men not only thought better, but they could work better than other men.

"The same perfect self-control and perfect subjection of his emotions to the mandates of his will are exhibited in his conduct when smitten to the earth, and blinded by the light and voice from heaven. John, when arrested by the same voice on the Isle of Patmos, fell on his face as a dead man, and dared not to stir or to speak till encouraged by the language, 'Fear not.' But Paul (or Saul) showed no symptoms of alarm or terror. The voice, the blow, the light, the glory, and the darkness that followed, were sufficient to upset the strongest mind ; but he, master of himself and his emotions, instead of giving way to exclamations of fear, simply said, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' With his reason and judgment as steady and strong as ever, he knew at once that something was wanted of him, and ever ready to act, he asked what it was.

"From this time on, his track can be distinguished by the commotion about it, and the light above it. Straight back to Jerusalem, from which he had so recently come with letters to legalize his persecutions, he went to cast his lot in with those he had followed with violence and slaughter. His strong heart never beat one quicker pulsation through fear, when the lofty turrets of the proud city flashed on his vision. Neither did he steal away to the dark alleys and streets, where the disciples were concealed, and tell them secretly his faith in the Son of God. He strode into the synagogues, and before the astonished priests preached Christ and Him crucified. He thundered at the door of the Sanhedrin itself, and shaking Jerusalem like an earthquake, awoke a tempest of rage and fury on himself. With assassins dogging his footsteps, he at length left the city.

His Eyes on Regions Beyond

"But, instead of going to places where he was unknown, and where his feeling would be less tried, he started for his native city, his father's house, the house of his boyhood, for his kindred and friends. To entreaties, tears, scorn and violence, he was alike impervious. To Antioch and Cyprus, along the coast of Syria and Rome, over the known world, he went like a blazing comet, waking up the nations. From the top of Mars' Hill, with the gorgeous city at his feet, and the Acropolis and Parthenon behind him, on the deck of his shattered vessel in the intervals of the crash of billows, in the gloomy walls of a prison, on the borders of the eternal Kingdom, he speaks in the same calm and determined tone. Deterred by no danger, awed by no

presence, and shrinking from no responsibility, he moves before us like some grand embodiment of power. The nations heave around him, and kings turn pale at his presence. Bands of conspirators swear to neither eat nor drink till they have slain him; rulers and priests combine against him; and people stone him; yet over the din of conflict and storm of violence, his voice of eloquence rises clear and distinct as a trumpet call, as he still preaches Christ and Him crucified. The whip is laid on his back, until the blood starts with every blow, and then his mangled body is thrown into a dungeon. But at midnight you hear that same calm; strong voice, which has shaken the world, poured forth in a hymn of praise to God, and lo! an earthquake rocks the prison to its foundations; the manacles fall from the hands of captives, the bolts withdraw of themselves, and the massive doors swing back on their hinges.

"One cannot point to a single spot in his career where he faltered a moment, or gave way to discouragement or fear. Through all his perilous life, he exhibited the intrepidity of character and lofty spirit. With his eyes on regions beyond the ken of ordinary mortals, and kindling on glories it was not permitted him to reveal, he pressed forward to an incorruptible crown, a fadeless Kingdom. And then his death, how indescribably sublime. Napoleon, dying in the midst of the midnight storm, with the last words that fell from his lips a battle cry, watching in delirium the torn heads of his mighty columns, as they disappeared in the smoke of the conflict, is a sight that awes and startles us. But behold Paul, also a war-worn veteran, battered with many a scar, though in a spiritual warfare, looking not on the earth but on heaven. Hear his calm, serene voice ringing over the storms and commotions of life : 'I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.'"

REPORTS OF RECENT CONVENTIONS

At Buffalo, N. Y.

"Sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," is the way St. Paul expressed the matter, when speaking of those high and exalted privileges of Christians, as in their seasons of fellowship they communed one with another concerning their heavenly hopes and prospects as members of the New Creation. Ever since Christianity was instituted, followers of the Lord Jesus Christ have realized the advantage and profit of convening in His name, and of conferring together with regard to the various features of the faith and concerning how they might encourage and edify one another in that life of trust and faith into which Christ their Savior introduces them. Christians today .have special reason for thanksgiving in realizing that the privilege of fellowship in Christ is still theirs.

A delightful and blessed experience of communion in the Lord, and of sitting together at His feet, may well be considered the sum of the report of the Convention held in Buffalo, New York, September 1-3. It has been our happy privilege to realize that all our Conventions in these recent years, have been fruitful in the spiritual blessings of renewed faith, hope, courage, and love. But the brethren recently convening in Buffalo pronounced this

Convention the best and most successful of them all, that is, if any one of them could be said to be better than another. The City of Buffalo being quite centrally located, a good number of the Middle States were represented. It was the first Convention that many of the friends have attended in several years and they felt all the more cause for rejoicing and giving thanks. The entire number in attendance at the various sessions of the Convention aggregated about five hundred; the largest number in attendance at any one session, being about one hundred on Sunday afternoon. However, it is not the numbers present in these days that is the important consideration. Our gatherings are small and insignificant as compared with some of other Christian bodies. The promise of the dear Master in these days, is as ever precious to those who measure things according to the Spirit: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in their midst."

There were unmistakable evidences of the Master's presence throughout the various meetings of the gathering at Buffalo. The spirit of confidence, peace, inward joy, was apparent on all faces and repeatedly expressed by look and word to one another. The ministries of the brethren who addressed the meetings, though imperfect and far from being what they could have wished, nevertheless, appeared to have the sweet benediction of the Lord. Messages of comfort, words of cheer and hope, were given forth that seemed to fill the need of the friends and to cause them to realize a new sense of that excelling love of God, and by which they seemed to feel a renewed security in the great Rock of Ages. The vital and important issues and themes that have lain near to the hearts of all the faithful during the past nineteen centuries, were again reviewed in the testimonies and songs as well as in the addresses of the brethren. The old, old story, of gracious heavenly love, was if possible sweeter than ever before; and as the brethren again contemplated the fact that all things are onward moving toward that most solemn and significant event, the establishment of the Kingdom of God's dear Son, they were reminded afresh of the need for the exercise of eternal vigilance, the urgent need for close living to the Master, of possessing more abundantly of His Holy Spirit, as well as the need for the girding up of the loins of their minds, that they might be prepared for the endurance of sore trials, heartaches and conflicts ere they reach the end of their earthly pilgrimage.

The attention of the brethren was called to the importance in these days of "holding the Head," of bestowing proper honor upon Him who is the great Shepherd of the flock, of squaring all our interpretations of Scripture, all that we endorse as truth, by the infallible words of our Lord, the Apostles and Prophets, and of allowing no human instrumentality to take the place in our hearts, that belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ alone; for in this and in no other way, can that close relationship with Him be preserved, that is so necessary if we would be kept free from deceptive influences, and be in a position to progress in Divine truth and grace. Truly the fellowship at Buffalo was a foretaste of coming joys.

As evidence of the Lord's rich blessing attending this Convention, we quote from a letter received from one of the brethren writing for the Class in Buffalo, since the Convention:

"It hardly seems possible that our sweet fellowship with those of like precious faith is now a thing of the past; but all things have an end. It only makes us yearn more for the time when partings will be no more: The dear Lord blessed us so much more than we really believed to be possible; just as His Word tells us: 'Prove Me now and see if I will not open the windows of

heaven and pour out such a blessing as ye will not be able to receive: Surely it proved to be a regular cloudburst of blessing. And as a Class we believe we were the greatest recipients. While no one can say what a year may bring forth, (it is in our Father's hand) if it be His will perhaps we will arrange for another convention next year. Perhaps a greater number of friends would in this way plan their year to better advantage and be with us."

At Richmond, Va.

Dear Brethren:

The friends met at Richmond, Va., for a three days' Convention, September 1-3. It was a test of courage on account of the inclement weather, and proved that the brethren assembled were not by any means "fair weather Christians."

The first session of the Convention was held Saturday evening, from 5:30 to about 7:00 o'clock. Deep interest and appreciation were manifested in this opening service. Sunday morning, at 10 o'clock there was a prayer, praise and testimony meeting conducted by the Chairmen. This service was indeed a very delightful one, and the expressions of love and devotion, together with the firm resolutions to continue on in the Narrow Way were heart cheering. There were three discourses and a question meeting during the remainder of Sunday. These meetings were all of much benefit spiritually, and the expressions of interest and appreciation gratifying. Monday was spent similar to Sunday: Hymns of praise and several discourses filled the day. We feel that the friends very much enjoyed this day also; and when at its close they gathered around and sang that beautiful hymn, "God Be with You Till We Meet Again," we realized how sweet is the relationship which exists among God's dear people. May the season of fellowship in Richmond redound to the honor of our God and to the upbuilding of His saints.

Your brother in Christ, H. W. N. -- N. Y.

At Springfield, Mass.

Dear Friends:

At a meeting of the Springfield Church, the undersigned was instructed to convey to the "Herald" Editorial Committee its thanks for the announcements of the Labor Day Convention just concluded.

We had a good attendance -- about one hundred brethren being present at the Sunday afternoon meeting -- and we feel that the "Herald" contributed very much toward such a "consummation devoutly to be wished."

It certainly was good to be here. The spirit of love, harmony, and fellowship was present throughout all the proceedings. We thank our Heavenly Father, the dear Lord, and all the brethren for a season of glorious fellowship and edification.

May the Lord multiply much opportunities for assembling ourselves together and exhorting one another.

As you say in the last "Herald," the Truth is the Lord's and our responsibility for hearing it is as great as our responsibility for teaching it.

May the Lord continue to keep all of us in His ways, not ours.

Your brother by His grace, G. E. M. -- Mass.

At Smithfield, Me.

Dear Ones:

Last Sunday, on the shores of North Pond, town of Smithfield, this State, ten brothers and sisters met, representing the towns of North Jay, Wilton, New Sharon, Belgrade, Unity and Bangor. A praise, prayer and testimony meeting was led by Brother John McLellan, of Wilton, an address by Brother J. H. Jodrey of North Jay, and a study, "The Temple of God," was conducted by Brother Marshall, of Bangor.

We are unable to describe the results, immediate and, following, attending this blessed arrangement provided by our Heavenly Father. Nor did we forget the convening members of the Divine family yet in the flesh, the country over, at this Labor Day season.

We were particularly exercised with the thought of earnestly concentrating on overcoming present powerfully evil conditions, the need of patience up to the time of the crown receiving by the faithful and the finishing of the Temple, the House of Sons, of which our adorable Lord is the Head, and the contemplation of its place and work in the future. And what a Love Feast it was! joys set thus before us.

May God be more and more glorified in your lives, is the prayer of your servant-brother,

E. P. McK. -- Me.

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

Dear Brethren:

Having lifted our hearts in deep thankfulness to our Heavenly Father, for the many blessings and encouragement we received through Brother Blackburn's stay among us, we desire also to express our gratitude to the Pastoral Bible Institute through whom his visit was made possible. We wish to assure you that the brother helped us to realize more fully, the blessed favors and privileges that are ours at this time and helped us, to a deeper and better appreciation of the wonderful height, breadth, and depth of our Father's love, and also the love and faithfulness of His dear Son, as he brought before our minds the wonderful attributes of both; as manifested in our Savior's life on earth.

We do pray that our Lord may continue to richly bless your efforts, to the edifying and building up of "His little ones in the most holy fait," and that His Holy Spirit may so work in your own hearts, to will and to do His good pleasure. until that blessed day, when the Marriage of the Lamb has come and His Wife hath made herself ready.

Greetings to all the dear friends.

Your brethren in Christ Jesus,

Associated Bible Students,

Glance, Bay, N. S., Can.

Dear Brethren:

I feel I must write a little note to try and thank you for the excellent and helpful articles which appear with such unfailing regularity in "The Herald." I am so glad that you do not go out of your way to attack others who have not the light that you possess, or who do not faithfully follow the light they have; that you construct rather than destroy, and that you state the truth so kindly and tactfully. Of course, as heralds, you must proclaim the King's Message, the Good News -- you would not think of doing otherwise. While the work is a labor of love, yet I am sure it costs you more than perhaps you would admit. But it is worth it and nothing of real merit and lasting value, is ever accomplished without strenuous endeavor. Pebbles lie on the surface, but precious stones have to be dug out and sought for.

I would not trouble you with these feeble words of mine only that I have the authority of the great Apostle to the Gentiles that we should give honor to whom honor is due. It is due you for the splendid way "The Herald," is conducted. It may be that sometimes you are grumbled at, well of course, that is only to be expected. It is so easy to find fault and some seem to delight to do it. I have only been a reader of "The Herald," for just about a year, but now look forward to its arrival, knowing that I shall receive from its pages real help and comfort.

I pray God who is behind all truth to continue to bless your labors for His cause, and may many bless your efforts and find in "The Herald" that truth which indeed can set them free.

Yours sincerely, S. E. K. -- Eng.

Gentlemen:

Please send me the "Divine Plan of the Ages," for which I enclose check for fifty cents.

I picked up by chance a copy of "Where Are the Dead?" on the Elevated, and it revived in me an interest in a future life -- a belief in which has just about faded. The pamphlet was intelligently and fascinatingly written, however, and I hope the larger book is as good.

Yours very truly,

A. E. -- Ill.

The Herald of Christ's Kingdom

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REVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS

"IS THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IMPOSSIBLE?"

WHEREVER Christianity has gone with its pronouncement of those sublime and lofty ideals advocated by its Founder, there has been more or less a division of thought amongst the people on the question of the ability of any one to measure up to the high standard thus set; and various opinions have been contended for in that connection. "The harshest critics of Christianity" says an Editorial in a recent issue of THE LITERARY DIGEST

"are those who believe it impossible of practice; a mode of life inherently hopeless." Reference is made in the Editorial, to a statement by Dr. Sidney M. Berry, Secretary of the English Congregational Union: "Dr. Berry admits his acquaintance with the acute problems of the day, and does not attempt to minimize them, but he finds the chief hindrance to the practice of the Christian life, is not its difficulty, but the unwillingness of men to try it, as he shows in an article contributed to a series appearing in the London DAILY NEWS AND WESTMINSTER GAZETTE on 'If Christ Came to London.' There is disillusionment on every hand, Dr. Berry admits. 'Men hear the Golden Rule preached, but they find the dominant note in business life to be hard and relentless competition. They hear of a Kingdom of peace, but they find in the world outside either war or preparation for war.' They find the world a hard place, 'unfriendly to religion except in a sentimental fashion.' But the world is never so black as either the idealists or the realists paint it, and things are not so hopeless as they seem. Is it impossible, then, for the average man to live out Christ's teachings? Dr. Berry replies:

"To try to follow the teaching of Christ is the biggest standard any man can set before himself, and there is the human certainty that he will fail again and again, and be made to feel ashamed that he even professed to be a Christian at all.

"But if Christ came to London, or anywhere else, it is not that kind of man whom He would condemn. The man who knows how far off he is, is just the man who knows the real thing when he sees it, and he would not be the man to miss Christ if He came again. The people who would miss the greatness in Him, and perhaps try to laugh Him out of court, or take more active steps to silence Him, would be the case-hardened people, some of them no doubt the conventionally religious, but with equal certainty many of them the conventional materialists of the Age. Probably among these modern Pharisees would be the superior critics who think religion an outworn thing, and those who take as much pride in their lack of righteousness as the older type of Pharisee did in his possession of it'

"But those who attempt the Christian way of life are not upon an impossible quest, says Dr. Berry, though, he goes on, 'the whole Christian ideal can not, of course, be realized at once, and Christ never thought it could, or He would not have spoken of His Kingdom as a seed or leaven.' Men, we are told, are not courageous enough for the whole campaign at once, nor would the conditions allow it. For instance, 'the man who is in a job where his living depends upon doing as he is told, and who is asked to do things which are not square, is in a position which is desperately hard. Not only his living but the living of those whom he loves depends upon keeping his job, and yet it is associated with practices which he loathes.' What is he to do? Is he to stake everything on principle and refuse to follow instructions? Men have followed this course, says Dr. Berry:

"But perhaps that way is too hard for all men, and in some cases the responsibility has to be thrown back upon the man who issues the orders. The prevalence of dishonest practices in trade has probably been exaggerated, but there is enough of it to cause serious concern both to Christian employers and employees.

"That is one of the problems typical of so many others. To carry out the teaching of Christ may seem an impossible problem face to face with present conditions, but no one can read the story of the past without receiving encouragement from it. Progress has been made.'

"To the question, then, whether the world is more likely to be helped by those who say that Christianity is impossible and who, therefore, take no active steps to assist it, or by those who, realizing their own weakness and the evils of society, give themselves whole-heartedly to the work of religion, Dr. Berry replies:

"There can be little doubt as to the answer.

"In a celebrated passage in one of his books Lord Morley describes Jesus of Nazareth as "the far-off mystic of the Galilean hills." It is a phrase full of haunting music, but it does less than justice to the part which He has played in the affairs of men. Christianity is not a dreamy mysticism far removed from life. It is in the main current of the world's affairs, and the Founder of Christianity is better described as the Statesman of life, who guides men on their difficult journey toward the realization of their dreams."

Upon one occasion, in answer to a question Jesus said, "Ye do err, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God." One is often reminded of these words of the Savior as he hears one opinion or another expressed on the subject of the practical application of the teaching of Christ to mankind in general, in this dispensation under present conditions. It is only by recognizing the order of the Divine Plan of the Ages that the matter becomes clear. That order as the Scriptures portray, is that the life, ideals and ministry of the Son of God were never intended to effect any particular revolutionizing of the lives of humanity at large, during the present Age; the purpose of Christianity in this dispensation, being to select out of the world a chosen "little flock" to walk in the footsteps of Christ, to make their calling and selection sure to joint-heirship with Him in His Kingdom, that they may have a part in distributing the blessings of Divine grace to "whomsoever will," in the coming Age; when Satan and all the powers of evil are put down and when the Kingdom of God will be causing the Divine will to be done on earth, even as it is done in heaven. Addressing those who are to be His joint-heirs, Jesus said, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world"; and again, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom"; further, "to you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven."

Men in general, in this Age, not being called to the fellowship of Christ and to an understanding of the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven, and not taken into the secret counsels of the Lord, were never expected of the Lord to be living exponents of His life and teaching at this time. But to the contrary as the Apostle states, "the whole world lieth in the wicked one," groaning and travailing together in pain, waiting for the revelation of the sons of God.

As for those who become disciples of Christ and are invited into His intimate companionship, there need be no question as to the ability of these to fulfil the purposes of the Christian life and to have God's will wrought out in them. Jesus did not pray to the Father in vain when He said, "Sanctify them through Thy Truth." Nor did He promise in vain at the time He was taking His final departure when He said, "ye shall receive power." The Lord, by His Spirit, by the power of His Truth and the inspiration of the exceeding great and precious promises, has enabled consecrated believers to observe in their

hearts, and to a large extent in their lives also, those grand principles and ideals which the Savior expounded when He was here.

APOSTASY IN THE LAST TIMES

Truly the Scriptures point to the closing days of the Age as a time of general religious apostasy: "Many shall depart from the faith"; and "perilous times shall come," is the language used descriptive of our time. In addition to the lukewarmness, indifference and worldliness which are characteristic of our day, unbelief and infidelity under the guise of education, intellectuality and Modernism, have replaced the faith which was once delivered unto the saints by Christ and the Apostles. It is no marvel that the Savior in His message to the last Church, that of Laodicea, declares His utter repudiation of that Church because she will have rejected the faith and have proved herself to be in an apostate condition.

Mr. William W. Gregg, a lawyer, writing in THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW; refers to the fact that various religious organizations are losing ground so far as their real spiritual hold upon the people is concerned:

"A recent religious survey of the city of St. Louis reveals that for every four living churches there is one dead church. A more recent survey of Springfield, Massachusetts, gives Protestantism there only 'a fighting chance.' In another large city less than 24 per cent of all the churches of a single denomination are supported from living sources. The Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy embitters religious conventions and has spread to the foreign mission field. Many teachers and ministers are under suspicion as not being doctrinally 'sound.' Rumors of heresy trials and church 'splits' are in the air. The Presbyterians have appointed a notable committee 'to study the causes of unrest within the denomination,' while the eminent Episcopalians who are sponsoring the 'Bishops' Crusade' describe their Church 'as idle as a painted picture.' Dr. Stelzle, after conducting an extensive religious questionnaire, concludes that 'the Church as a whole has lost its grip upon a very large percentage of its members,' and Dr. Carroll in his report to the Inter-Church Conference describes as 'alarming' the waning membership in Protestant communions. The Men's Church League announces that 'over 32 per cent of, the Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist churches of the United States failed to add a single convert in 1927: Dr. Fosdick says: 'Religion in the United States is in a badly muddled state.'

"In brief, if the watchman on the walls of modern Zion be not stone blind and deaf, he must now hesitate long before crying 'All's well!'"

THE ACTS OF' THE APOSTLES AND THEIR LESSONS

UNDER THE POWER OF THE PENTECOSTAL FLAME

"Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." -- Acts 1:8.

THERE is no substantial evidence that the title, "The Acts of the Apostles," was given to the book which follows the Gospels, by the one who wrote it, or

that it was affixed thereto by Divine authority. There has been, however, a very general agreement among expositors and students of the writings of the Apostles and of others who wrote contemporaneously, that the title is in every way an appropriate one. The Book of Acts is a well authenticated record of many of the prominent incidents connected with the life and service of the Apostles as they went forth in obedience to the Lord's command to evangelize all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. As a part of the divinely inspired record, it contains valuable information for us today that will be found well worth our prayerful consideration.

Beyond a doubt, the writer is Luke, physician and faithful companion of St. Paul; who also shared with the Apostle in many of the experiences he recorded. The motive for writing the book was a desire on his part to supplement his Gospel narrative with a fitting sequel. Having recorded the words and life of Jesus, His death and resurrection, he continues his story over into the period of the establishment of the Church and the momentous events connected therewith. The Christian Church is greatly indebted to this unostentatious co-laborer of the Apostles. The addition of his Gospel to that of Matthew, Mark, and John has contributed some rich gems collected from the words of Jesus that the other writers omitted, and without which the story of His earthly life would have been incomplete. In thus recording the events of the beginning of the Gospel Church, and the prominent part played therein by the Apostles, the writer of the Acts has furnished us with an invaluable link between the Gospels and the Epistles, establishing at once the authenticity of both.

Progressive Unfolding of Divine Revelation

In this connection it will be interesting to note the relationship of the Acts to the preceding Gospels, and the Old Testament records. The progressive nature of the Divine revelation is most thoroughly established in the arrangement of these books. In the Old Testament, we have the Father revealed to us as the great supreme Creator, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning, whose law of righteousness and justice demands the perfect obedience of all His intelligent creatures. There we are shown that He foresaw the end from the beginning and therefore foresaw the entrance of sin and its effectual barrier to His favor. But though in types, covenants, promises and prophecies, He reveals His love for man, yet the need of an atonement is made imperative, otherwise the sentence of death must be executed upon all. In all the record of four thousand years the one message that stands out preeminently as the Word of God to man is, that "without the shedding of blood (a ransom) there is no remission of sin." The character of the Father demanded this. In the four Gospel narratives covering the incidents of our Lord's earthly life, His birth, teachings, death, and resurrection, we have a further unfolding of God's progressive revelation, as the Apostle John has informed us: "For the law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17.) Appropriately, therefore, the Gospels tell of our Lord's love for mankind and His willingness to cooperate in the Father's plan; of how He divested Himself of pre-human glory and was found in fashion as a man, humbling Himself even unto the death of the cross. Thus He is revealed as the Gift of God to man, and the medium of atonement whereby God can be just, and yet the justifier of them who believe in Jesus. Herein is revealed the oneness of the Father and the Son.

But Jesus Himself assured His disciples that the revelation was not yet complete. Further unfolding was to be made possible; only when the Holy Spirit had come; and in order that they might receive this further illumination it was expedient that He go away: "For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. . . . I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. . . . Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: and He will show you things to come." (John 16:7, 12, 13.) How fitting then it is to find the Book of Acts in every particular, a record of the descent, illumination, power, and operation of the Holy Spirit, as it came in fulfillment of "the promise of the Father," upon the Apostles themselves and subsequently upon all the Church.

Revelation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

As the Apostles went forth to evangelize all nations they were to baptize all believers in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and is it not manifest that without the Book of Acts, the coming of the Holy Spirit and the way in which it operates to save, renew and enlighten the Church, would have been very imperfectly understood. And be it further observed that all the remainder of the New Testament could be truthfully said to emanate from the Book of the "Acts of the Apostles"; thus, the revelation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is complete.

As to the contents of this book, it would be impossible within the confines of a hasty review to give even a passing thought on all its valuable lessons, or to arrange anything like a complete outline of all its outstanding truths. But a careful survey of its opening chapters will lay the foundation for a deeper appreciation of the importance of the book as a whole. In these opening chapters we have the genesis of the Church recorded; and the correct understanding of these is as important to the Church, as the genesis of Creation is essential to the complete harmony and understanding of all the Scriptures. The secret springs of the early Church's faith, purity, and boldness, as well as the simplicity and effectiveness of the Apostolic doctrines, and the unparalleled success of the early ministry, as these are recorded in subsequent chapters, are all revealed and made plain in the fact of the Church's personal participation in the profound realities of chapters 1 and 2.

In chapter 1 we have briefly related, the incidents connected with our Lord's last appearance to His disciples before His ascension. We find them still clinging to the hope that had characterized their expectations for so long, and asking again, "Lord wilt Thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel"; and again, as on former occasions they are cautioned with the reminder that there are some things of much greater moment just now, than the knowledge of such secrets as the Father's wisdom withholds from even the most faithful of His creatures. Then follows the account of the ascension, the comforting message of the angels that He will come again, the return to Jerusalem, the ten days of watching and prayer in the Upper Room, waiting for the Holy Spirit, and the well intentioned, but apparently unauthorized appointment of a successor to Judas.

"Ye Shall Receive Power"

It will be worth our while to examine a few of these incidents and to note how definitely this chapter links up the history of the Apostles before and

after Pentecost: Before Luke records the Pentecostal baptism and its immediate effect upon them, he has given us an introductory chapter which shows the disciples just as they were prior thereto. Impatient, disposed to a selfish desire for Kingdoms positions, impetuous and fearful; then he proceeds to tell of the Spirit's outpouring and the extraordinary results upon these same characters. We are told that among the many talents possessed by Luke was that of artistic skill, and he seems to have employed the artist's method here; first giving us the fitting background whereby the work of the Holy Spirit upon these same characters maybe the more clearly seen and admired.

Let us now note the significance of verse 8, "But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be My witnesses." In these words Jesus foretold the influence of the Spirit's power upon the minds and conduct of the Apostles; and as we follow on through succeeding chapters, and on through the Epistles, we are constantly reminded of how real and potent was this power. Whereas in the days before Pentecost we find them with their minds occupied with things unrevealed, burdened, with a curiosity to know the secrets of the Father's Plan regarding how and when Jesus would assume His regal power and enthrone them with Himself, or just what position this one or the other would have in the Kingdom; we observe that never thereafter did He need to repeat the word of caution or, what may have been intended as a gentle reproof, recorded in verse 7; or to remind them of the impropriety of that impatience that forgets that secret things and prerogatives belonging to God, are not subjects He would encourage us to pry into.

Evidently the Spirit gave the Apostles power to discern the wisdom of the Divine arrangement, which teaches that God's great clock of the Ages has not been set to encourage undue haste for Kingdom honors, or to satisfy an idle curiosity that is unappreciative of the greater blessing accruing to those who willingly leave such secrets locked up in the Divine counsels. Not that those early disciples lost interest in matters relating to His return and their future association, with Him; on the contrary, while they retained all of their fervent desires respecting His return and their Kingdom hopes, never growing lukewarm or indifferent thereto, the Apostles did however experience that adjustment of mind, that spirit of a sound mind, that views all matters according to their relative importance, and by this they discovered that "the golden silence of Scripture is as much intended as its golden speech."

Important Lessons Received from Pentecostal Benediction

Let us observe the evidence of this in their various Epistles. Doubtless St: Peter either asked the question of Acts 1:6, or was specially interested in its being asked at that time. But if so, we find no evidence that he repeated it in all his after-days. His ministry is recorded briefly in Acts; and two of his Epistles have come down to us in which he expresses a burning interest in the full enlightenment and progress of all the Church "through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." Again and again he refers to the return of the Lord and the hopes of the Church connected therewith, admonishing that, "the end of all things is at hand." Therefore the "more sure Word of prophecy" that "shineth in a dark place until the day dawn," must be kept fresh in mind. The dissolving heavens, and turbulent social conditions on earth are signs stimulating to sobriety and holiness. But all his allusions to that great event are kept well within the limits of this kindly reproof of

chapter 1, and the force and burden of his teachings are based on clearly defined facts, fundamentals and certainties. James likewise makes the subject of the Lord's return, the pivotal point of his one letter to the Church. He uses it to offset the temptations and trials then experienced, or as a special encouragement to patience: for, "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." But he too avoids any speculative deductions, and gives no hint of wishing that he could tell his brethren just how long they must wait.

Again we think of John whose special place in the Master's love is a matter of Scriptural record; likewise his special desire for a preferred position in Kingdom rulership with Jesus, implying surely that the question of Acts 1:6 represented his own spirit also. Is it not significant that we find no repetition of this query or spirit in his three Epistles, or in his more wonderful record of visions witnessed on the Isle of Patmos. Surely there was abundant opportunity to display the old time spirit of Pre-Pentecostal days when he introduces the subject of Christ's appearing and his own inexpressible joy of being like Him then, or in connection with the stupendous panoramic scenes witnessed "in the Spirit on the Lord's day," when he is assured of His Lord's speedy return. But the impetuous John has become the devoted man of faith and patience, and he can now hear his beloved Master's heart-cheering message, "Behold I come quickly and My reward is with Me," without a betrayal of impatient boldness voiced in the query "when?" but answers back in the words of grace and wisdom "amen, even so come, Lord Jesus." St. Paul, though not privileged to be among those who were present on that memorable day of Pentecost, but who received his enlightenment and power under different surroundings and circumstances, likewise displayed in his ministry the same "mind of the spirit." He too discusses this great theme again and again, but all his admonitions, warnings, and forecasts of the future are also kept in full accord with this farewell statement of Jesus. "It is not for you to know the times and seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power," implies that there are secrets, details, which neither piety nor learning can find out, so long as the premium is placed by God, upon that faith that will not turn back though its fruition tarry long. Thus St. Paul prays for all the Church: "the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." -- 2 Thess. 3:5.

They Commended the Sober and Reverent Study of Prophecy

But let us not hastily conclude that the examples of the Apostles in this matter discourage the spirit of devout interest in prophetic dates; and clearly defined times and seasons. Rather, we should reason that since they have urged upon us the importance of prophecy, it would be manifestly wrong for any one to discourage the proper study of the subject; for he who at any time neglects the lamp of prophecy, loses a blessing upon which the Master laid great stress, and proves himself deficient in appreciation of a very important part of the "all Scripture given by inspiration of God." Let none, then, of the truly consecrated undervalue those prophetic time evidences, which were designed to guide our words and deeds. Proper attention given to these must result in lasting profit to the careful student, by furnishing the proof that all God's plans are working together in time, according to His foreknown purposes.

Thus St. Peter addresses us today, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." (2 Pet. 1:19.) Surely we have much to encourage our hearts, and stimulate our interest in prophecy today, since it is evident that the signs all about us speak of the near approach of the dawn. But the point to be noted here is, that the disciples were asking for information on a feature of God's unrevealed purposes, that it was not proper for Our Lord to give them, and there are many such questions being asked today. For very good reasons this information must be withheld from the disciples; and be it noted, one reminder from the Lord was sufficient to teach them this lesson. They did not persist in attempting to find it out, and evidently never did possess an accurate knowledge respecting the exact time of the full restoration of Israel, and the beginning of the actual Kingdom reign, nor can any one today claim more than an approximate knowledge regarding these same matters, though rejoicing in the more brilliant light of prophecy focused upon this time.

The Apostles Avoided Guessing and Speculating

The disciples did not conclude that if they kept on speculating that they would surely find these things out through some medium, and then make their guesses a part of the Lord's Message. The entire absence of speculation in all their subsequent writings on this, or any other subject, and the wisdom which they displayed in concentrating their efforts upon on the important matters of purity of heart, and fall submission to the known will of God are surely worthy of sober consideration. Like Jesus, they could truthfully say, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." -- John 3:11.

How important it is that all should remember the Word Of God which declares that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." Prophecy is the announcing in advance of the Divine purposes, and intended for the guidance of His devoted servants, furnishing them with certain information essential to their understanding and encouragement; but never go going beyond the point where secrecy would best serve the Lord's will. Moreover, even in respect to those .things to be known by the Church through prophecy, it is well to remember also that since prophecy comes to us from the Holy of Holies, through the medium of the Holy Spirit, and by the mouth of holy men of God, it is evident that prophetic expositors and

prophetic students, must needs be holy, humble, reverential characters, in order to enter such holy precincts.

The example of the Apostles therefore, is not in opposition to such reverent interest in the revealed purposes of God, but it is in conflict with that persistent determination to know such secrets as God by His Word, or providences, has closed up. "After that the Holy Spirit was come upon them" they did not speculate, guess, or become absorbed in such things, but allowed patience to have her perfect work, while with a consuming zeal for the Lord and the brethren, they waited, and labored, under the inspiration of the prophetic lamp that illuminated their pathway; and thank God, left behind them not their abandoned, untrustworthy visions, and momentarily spasmodic thrills and discoveries, made in a futile attempt to anticipate God's secrets and to share His prerogatives, but they left a message that rings clear and authentic with the stamp of eternal verity.

Before and After Pentecost

A further important lesson may be gathered from these first chapters so illustrative of the marvelous difference between men possessed of a measure of truth relative to the purposes of God, and men enlightened and empowered by the Spirit of God. Jesus had told them to remain in Jerusalem and to wait for the "promise of the Father" by which they would receive the necessary qualifications for service but evidently the passing days seemed long, and so we are informed that the routine of action was one day changed to a business meeting of the assembled company. The first few days no doubt were filled with absorbing rehearsals of the experiences of the past forty days. They would live over again their fears and joys, the surprising and mysterious appearances of the Lord, and the influence of His word and acts upon their hearts. Perhaps too they wondered much as to just what His command to wait in Jerusalem might mean to them in the way of further demonstrations of His power.

But finally Peter presents a proposal that seems to have met with the unanimous approval of the whole assembly of 120 brethren. The defection of Judas had created a vacancy that the Prophet had foretold would be filled by another, and it seemed to the assembled brethren a perfectly legitimate thing for them to proceed to fulfil the prophecy. The absence of any instructions from Jesus to undertake such a responsible task, or the fact that the prophecy quoted by Peter gave no hint as to how the successor of Judas would be chosen, seems not to have deterred them in the least.

The same impetuous disposition, previously displayed in their haste to fulfil prophecy by wanting to make Jesus a king, before He was a sin offering, manifests itself once more in this incident. Like many of their brethren in after days, they forgot that the One who dictated the prophecy must be waited upon for its fulfilling, and that no premature scheme of theirs would ever be adopted by Him.

What the Holy Spirit Revealed Concerning Teachers in the Church

A sufficient argument against the appointment of Matthias seems to be found in the unmistakable choice of Paul later on by the Lord Himself. He had left no instructions behind regarding this matter, but rather had intimated that nothing should be undertaken until power from on high had been received. The appointment of an Apostle whose responsibilities would involve so much, could not in the very nature of things be left to natural men, good men though they were. Furthermore, we note that the method of procedure on the part of these dear disciples must necessarily raise a doubt in our minds regarding this matter. Before the Lord's mind was sought at all, it would appear that practically the whole company of possible candidates were eliminated, and the Lord limited in His choice to one of the two remaining brethren whom they had chosen. But like Samuel when called upon to anoint the successor of Saul, they were to learn that while the Lord's selection might seem to be among those in their immediate presence, the man of His choosing was yet out in the field waiting to be called. Manifestly the whole procedure was wrong, and therefore entirely ignored by the Lord, and their well intentioned zeal viewed by Him in the same sympathetic way as some of their previous exhibitions of over-confidence and haste had been.

Perhaps in this incident we have something recorded that has been intended by the Lord to be an object lesson to all the generations of the Church. We observe that the Apostles themselves after the Holy Spirit had come, were never disposed to forget that it was one of the Lord's sole prerogatives to appoint an Apostle or a special servant of the Church. Their Epistles to the Church abound with reminders of the headship of Jesus; and with illustrations calculated to establish this thought in the minds of all; illustrations such as those of the human body, or the relationship, of husband and wife, etc., where the responsibility of the head is preeminently set forth. The strictest rules were laid down as to who should be considered worthy of such responsibilities in the Church. Heady, high-minded, self-seeking leaders no matter how gifted they might be naturally, were never to be chosen. Evidences of the Lord's appointment must always be looked for before the Church laid its hands upon them. Church history of the past and present affords the most striking evidence that, simply because the Scriptures taught that Elders should be chosen to serve the Church, a very large proportion of its leaders have been chosen by popular vote rather than by the Holy Spirit's manifest approval, or without waiting until evidences were forthcoming that they were good men, and, "full of the Holy Spirit."

Furthermore, after the Holy Spirit had been received and given free course in their minds, we read of no further attempt on the part of the Apostles to pick up a prophetic statement in the Old Testament and then proceed to force a premature fulfillment of it, or to arrange the larger proportion of its fulfillment, and then generously permit the Lord the privilege of endorsing their arrangement. Rather we find that while prophecy was frequently referred to as corroborative testimony, and its importance again and again emphasized, and the Church admonished to view it as an indispensable feature of Divine revelation, yet they steadfastly resisted any effort of forced interpretation. They recognized that God's methods of working out His foreknown purposes, as these were foretold in prophecy, would be on a much

larger, grander scale than any abortive scheme their unauthorized haste could ever produce.

Need to Wait upon the Great Revealer of Secret

Is this not illustrated in the incomparable difference between Matthias and Paul: Of the former we know nothing except that he was a brother in the Church. His voice is never heard, nor the briefest reference made to his zeal or other qualifications, nor is there any tradition respecting him upon which any reliance could be placed. But of Paul, the one foreknown prophetically, we have the proof of his Divine appointment in Epistles that have constituted the bulwark of the Christian faith, while the world, Jewish and Gentile, has heard a voice that has had more influence and power than any other human tongue has ever had since Pentecost. How significant this is! Truly, as the heavens are high above the earth, so are the ways of God high above the councils and schemes of men. How necessary it is that we should remember that when we rush into hasty conclusions respecting prophecy, we are displaying a spirit of improper boldness, in contrast with that of the angels who stand and wait in reverent inquiry.

Prophecy is like a rose in its proper development. If we become impatient and pull out the leaves and petals of a flower in order to hasten its unfolding beauty, we will most certainly mar and disfigure nature's intentions, and produce a rose which will be very quickly rejected and thrown away. If on the other hand we watch the slower methods of development designed by the Creator of the rose's beauty, we will be gratified to possess at last a perfect, pleasing flower, incomparably beautiful and satisfactory. How glad we are that the Great Author of prophecy is also its wise, patient custodian, and revealer, who in His own due time will work out every prophecy pertaining to the Church and the world in a manner consistent with His perfect, wisdom and power, eliciting thereby the admiration and praise of all His intelligent creatures.

"They Were All with One Accord in One Place"

Continuing our study, we find yet further results from these days of waiting, and the outpouring of the Spirit "when the day of Pentecost was fully come." The prolonged season of prayer, and the centralization of thought on the command and promise of Jesus, produced a most salutary effect. "They were all with one accord in one place" -- all minds had been prepared by the exercises of the proceeding days. Thus the conditions under which the Holy Spirit would embrace all in its power and illumination had been met, and hence all shared in the full benefit of that wonderful day.

Would it be irreverent to inquire here as to what the outcome might have been had these brethren of Jerusalem and its environs been divided and subdivided into several factions? Suppose some had chosen to assemble in Peter's home, some in John's, some in another brother's home, perhaps in the immediate vicinity, some in other quarters, and each company specializing in some individual or group interpretation of our Lord's command, differentiating thus between themselves and their fellows, while all claimed a desire for the fullest measure of the Spirit's outpouring? We have only to suggest such a situation to realize how abhorrent it would have been to the Lord. We know that under such circumstances the story of Pentecost would never have embraced these brethren in its record. The lesson is so apparent that it would be superfluous to multiply words to make a present day

application. How obvious it must be to any sincere mind, that if it were necessary that these brethren be of one mind and heart, and unitedly occupied in seeking the Spirit's power, in order that they might share in those Pentecostal blessings, so it must be today. The Bible is not tolerant toward factional divisions in the Church, but in positive, unmistakable language declares that such conditions are wholly traceable to an absence of the Holy Spirit's presence.

Pentecost is not merely an incident of two thousand years ago but a living, present day reality to all who meet its conditions. The Holy Spirit's office and work are unchangeable; likewise the conditions favorable to the Spirit's proper functioning. Therefore the issue is clear: our progress individually and collectively, the efficiency and success of our service, the degree of Divine favor enjoyed, are all contingent upon the impartation and our reception of the Holy Spirit. Surely the words of Jesus were intended to apply to all the Spirit begotten of the Age: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit has come upon you." Likewise the statement of Peter, "for the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are far off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:39.) Therefore, the Church that is not throbbing with this power from above, this perpetual blessing, has ceased to measure up to its privileges, and Pentecost has become a matter of history, rather than a blessed permanent experience.

Prayer as a Factor in Preparation for the Holy Spirit

We pass on now to a review of other portions of the Acts of the Apostles, meanwhile keeping the thought in, mind that their subsequent acts were the outcome of a Spirit controlled life, which began with Pentecost. We have observed that they spent a considerable portion of ten days in prayer, preceding the Spirit's outpouring, and have noted the results upon themselves and others. We are now to learn how prominent a factor prayer became in their lives subsequently. The Book of Acts is a record of the power of prayer in the days of the, early Church. In no better way than in this record could the Holy Spirit teach the entire Church that, her light in the world will be brilliant or obscure, her spiritual life robust and efficient, or languishing and ready to die, in proportion to her appreciation and experimental knowledge of the power of prayer. Certainly the book teaches that power with God, means power with men, for He has decreed that victory in the secret chamber must precede the outward evidences of His approval and blessing.

As a tangible proof of this we note the second reference to this prayer atmosphere :as found in chapter 2, verses 42 to 47, "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and 'in breaking of bread, and in prayers, having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." Here in concise language we are given the Scriptural test of any Church's spiritual standing. No Church that neglects the prayer life will ever enjoy these evidences of Divine approval, and no Church that takes God at His Word, and cultivates the spirit of prayer will be lacking these evidences of power from on high.

Let no one today be deceived with the thought that our day is so exceptional that we may overlook these pertinent facts, and excuse factional divisions, and the absence of unity and power, on the assumption that the final gathering of the wheat presupposes such conditions. Let the brethren everywhere prove God herewith, and join hands and hearts in a steadfast adherence to "the Apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, . . . and in prayers," and

there will yet be a response from heaven that will prove that when the avenue of prayer is cleared of all human, carnal obstructions the Holy Spirit will still lead to victory and efficiency.

In chapter 4, verse 31 we have another reference to prayer that is full of significance. Peter and John were so imbued with this spirit that they were improving the opportunities of the hour of prayer by going to the temple for that purpose. And herein, we are given an insight into the depths of their characters that ought to stir our souls to a constant emulation, and awaken us to the beauty and importance of a prayerful spirit.

What a Lesson is Here for Us!

Think of men who had experienced the extraordinary events of the day of Pentecost; who had suddenly found themselves possessed of such marvelous power, gifted with strength and wisdom to speak forth the purposes of God on that occasion, as did Peter; men who enjoyed such positive evidence of ability to carry forward a great movement, and yet feeling within themselves the need of the hour of prayer. Can it be that these are the same Apostles, who only a short time before, on returning from a mission, during which they had exercised a delegated power in casting out devils, needed to have their disposition to boast curbed, by the reminder that pride of heart had been the cause of Satan's deflection centuries before. It is even so! But now, how differently they act! Great as their experience had been they are not puffed up. They exhibit no spirit of self-sufficiency; they assume no attitude of superiority, make no boast of being once for all, the channel of Divine power and service, but like their Divine Master, who though perfect, found it necessary to betake Himself to the solitude for prayer, so they too, realized that continuous supplication at the throne of grace was essential to them, if they were to prove equal to their responsibilities.

How it strengthens our confidence in them when we discover this mark of sincere acknowledgment of need! What a lesson is here for us! How much greater our confidence can be in one whom we know to be a faithful man of prayer, one whose life displays the results of dwelling in the secret place. But alas, how easily a little knowledge, a little preeminence, a little natural ability may discourage the habit of prayer, and send us forth in our own strength, puffed up with a sense of importance, only to spoil our usefulness in a service that requires above everything else that humility that acknowledges the meaning of the Master's words, "without Me ye can do nothing."

The Spirit's Mighty Working

Consistent with the principle introduced by Jesus when He taught His disciples to observe the whitened fields, and then pray for harvesters, we find here, prayerful hearts are best prepared for service, more meet for the Master's use, because of a real oneness with Him. Thus Peter and John in the Lord's providence, were given a privilege of service, with far reaching results awaiting them at the Beautiful Gate. A cripple requesting aid received healing, and became the center of a great witness. Persecution followed and the Apostles were brought before the authorities for trial, and after a noble defense were let off on a sort of suspended sentence. Being released, they returned to the assembled brethren, reporting in detail their experiences and privileges. An enthusiastic prayer meeting followed: "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the Word of God with

boldness." Here we have a blessed manifestation of the Holy Spirit with which they had already been filled, as recorded in chapter 2, verse 4. Was this a second Pentecost, and a suggestion of repeated similar baptisms of the Holy Spirit, Surely not! On the contrary, it was a striking fulfillment of the Master's promise concerning the working of the Spirit, and an evidence of the beginning of the Spirit-filled life. In other words, it was a manifestation of the fact that they were begotten of the Spirit and had been inducted into the Body of Christ. Through the power of this Spirit, they were to "grow up- into Christ" by a daily appropriation of the Bread and Water of Life.

These prayer meetings brought confidence: "They spake the Word of God with boldness." The operation of the Holy Spirit under these circumstances produced an assurance and a certainty of mind that surmounted all obstacles. heart and voice, and "great grace was upon them all."

Has this any lessons for us today, or is it something too near the miraculous for us to expect its duplication in our experience now? As surely as we accept the book we are reviewing as a part of the Word of inspiration, just so surely does this portion tell us of possibilities within our reach if we will heed, and comply therewith.

This of course does not furnish a basis for the thought of some, that to enjoy the Pentecostal blessing we must of necessity expect to experience all of the peculiar excitements, and unusual demonstrations that characterized the days immediately following that Day of Pentecost. It would not be reasonable to expect such things now that we have the written Word. Therefore the Lord would not employ the same methods today, and literally shake the place where His people congregate for prayer. But who will dispute the fact that appropriate evidences of the Holy Spirit's presence will be forthcoming wherever His saintly ones lay themselves open to its power?

Though Miracles Have Ceased, the Spirit's Power Abides

It will still fill the hearts and minds with a holy joy, and fire them with a zeal and confidence where it is given its proper place. Therefore instead of allowing theories respecting the outpouring of the Spirit to discourage the desire for its repeated fillings, we are encouraged by this incident to earnestly desire more and more of its presence in our hearts and lives.

"Have you felt the Spirit's power?
Still there's more to follow;
Falling like a gentle shower?
Still there's more to follow;
Oh, the power the Spirit shows!
Still there's more to follow,
Freely He His power bestows,
Still there's more to follow."

When Jesus taught His disciples that when two of them would agree, and unite in the prayer of faith, they might expect definite results to follow, He meant it for us also. He meant that the practice of united prayer would be the dynamic powerhouse of the Church, from which a constant flow of spiritual power, invigoration, and confidence would permeate every phase of her life. For this reason, the Scriptures abound with encouragements to pray without ceasing, assuring us that real power such as God waits to impart, "Goeth not out except by prayer and fasting." Today the air is full of doubts and uncertainties; everywhere there is confusion of thought and teaching.

Controversy, speculation, and theorizing abound, with a consequent loss of that unity that gives strength and effectiveness. The message as proclaimed by many, is not a direct, forceful, discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, nor backed by that power of the Spirit that makes men say, "men and brethren what shall we do," but a message so largely vitiated by human philosophy as to produce lukewarmness, spiritual pride, factional differences and ceremonial formality. The remedy lies in Apostolic prayer meetings such as we are examining here, where the reassuring work of the Spirit keeps the heart receptive, the truth fresh and glorious, and makes His Message an unquenchable, burning fire in the heart; prayer meeting centers from which men and women will go forth in confidence, bearing trumpets with no uncertain, sound.

The Conference and Prayer with the Elders of Ephesus

Peter was liberated from, prison, doubtless in answer to prayer. In chapter 12, we are told of his imprisonment and of a prayer meeting held by the Church, "where constant and earnest prayer was made . . . and when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent His angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, . . . and when he had considered the thing he came to the house of Mary where many were gathered together praying." Peter had had a real experience, a tangible evidence of the Lord's blessing and he recognized at once the propriety of going to a prayer meeting where his testimony of appreciation could be given, and other hearts inspired by the rehearsal of what the Lord had done for him. The lesson is again clear and easily applied. Where there is a living, realization of Divine blessing, and the impelling power of gratitude is experienced, either by the individual or the Class, the prayerful atmosphere of the Church will be the delight and the joy of all. The early Church had real experience meetings, because they were obedient to the promptings of the Spirit; and the Pentecostal spirit was the spirit of prayer, and of utterance, for said they, "we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Wherever there is a Church without a vigorous living circle of prayer and testimony, without tangible evidences of the Lord's presence and power on such occasions, that Church has stepped aside from Pentecost.

Another incident, the influence of which, like a sweet fragrant incense, has remained in the Church until the present time, is found in Acts 20. It is one of those incidents which have endeared the Apostle Paul, that man of prayer and action, to the hearts of so many of God's people. At this time he is making a final visit to Jerusalem and cannot pass Ephesus without leaving a parting message. The Elders are summoned to meet him at Miletus, and there, hear from his lips one of the most pathetic and solemn appeals ever made to under-shepherds over the House of God. They are reminded of the preciousness of the Church to the Lord who purchased them with His own blood; of their responsibilities as under-shepherds, charged with the duty of safeguarding the Church from grievous wolves and hurtful influences. There, all the seriousness of Eldership in the Church of Christ is laid before them, by Paul their fellow servant, who himself loved the Church as his own soul. The conference terminated with a solemn season of prayer, which surely made a lasting impression upon the hearts of the assembled brethren. Our participation in this incident is not imaginary, but real. Paul, by virtue of his age-long apostleship has here summoned the Eldership of the entire Christian Church, and laid upon them these same weighty responsibilities. He pleads with one and all to be faithful to their God-given stewardship, entreating

them to feed the flock of God with only the pure doctrines of the Gospel of Christ. Brethren, Elders whom the Holy Spirit hath made overseers of the Church of God, we are not making any misapplication of this incident when we say, that only those servants of the Church who in spirit have met Paul at Miletus and received the impress of that solemn hour upon their hearts, and there knelt with him again and again in prayer for the Lord's wisdom, grace and guidance, to discharge all their obligations to Him and His Church, have been faithful under-shepherds. If we live with Paul in this little incident in Acts, and continue to follow him on through his marvelous record of fidelity, we shall share with him the crown of life he has surely gained.

Clearer Visions of Those Blessed Realities

With a feeling of reluctance we must conclude our examination of this most absorbing book. Lessons covering every feature of our relationship to the Lord and to one another seem to urge the, mind on and on, in the study and application of its many outstanding incidents. We have covered but a few of these in the present introduction, but the studious mind may easily discover many other suggestive incidents laden with practical lessons of the Spirit's office in the Church, a contemplation of which will reveal most clearly the fullness of God's will for all His Spirit begotten, Spirit-filled children; not necessarily the discovery of "new light," but clearer visions of those blessed realities experienced by the early Church, to whom the Apostle could write, "Ye have received an unction from the Holy One and ye all know it." If we of today doubt the possibility of knowing these things in a definite way, let us ponder over this revelation of the Spirit's power and wait before God in prayer for the promised blessing, and most certainly we will find ourselves much nearer to Pentecost than we may have thought.

In conclusion we might suggest that the brotherhood engendered by the Holy Spirit and recorded throughout the book, is a vindication of the high ideals of Jesus in respect to true brotherhood. The missionary spirit that pervades the Acts from beginning to end would furnish a theme of deepest interest. Likewise the wonderful sermons recorded therein are worthy of diligent study, on the part of all ministers of the Word. Unexcelled examples they are, of real Scriptural sermons; sermons that brought conviction, appealing not only to the head, but also to the heart. Perhaps no other book of the New Testament makes a stronger appeal to the Church to cultivate the true spirit of Bible study. From end to end it is an appeal to what has been written. All are encouraged to manifest the true Berean spirit of reverent investigation.

Jesus taught that the truth would purify, and this book proves how thoroughly the truth properly received will affect the life, relegating the nonessential, incompatible things to the background, and making the Word of God so dear and precious, that the frothy and insipid productions of natural or perverted minds will have no attraction. To this end we have in this record, the story of some emptied book shelves, the result of a bonfire that cost one Church (Ephesus) approximately \$8,500.00. Perhaps there might be found material enough today, the product of very recent years that has supplanted the Word of God, to even exceed this in monetary value, the removal of which would give evidence of a much needed revival of real Bible study, and lead many of the Lord's people who appear to be sadly confused at the present time, back into the old paths of true dispensational and character-building truth, back to the Apostolic message, and back to the Pentecostal atmosphere of power and efficiency.

THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE SONS OF GOD

"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." -- 1 Pet. 1:14, 15.

THE RELATIONSHIP of sons and children of God is the unspeakable privilege of those who truly and fully accept the office and work of Christ in their behalf. It is a most exalted and unspeakable privilege for one who has been born of a race blighted with sin and death, to have conferred upon him the honor and blessing as a son of God. It is not a privilege that any man can assume or take unto himself, as stated by the Apostle, "behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." The Scriptures leave no room for doubt as to the process by which one enters into, and is enabled to maintain this relationship as a member of the family of God. Faith and obedience may be said to be the sum total of the entire matter, as saith the Apostle, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk [live] not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

The urge of the Apostle Peter to disciples of Christ, to fashion themselves as obedient children, may be said to be one of the household exhortations which so abound in New Testament Scripture, intended not for those who are without, but exclusively to those who are of the Divine family. The revealing of God to the Christian as his Father, must of necessity signify a revelation of the duties and obligations of such as receive the calling of sons. Hence with the declaration of our Father's love, comes the endearing designation of our privilege and duty as His sons; and we read the title of "dear children," in one Epistle, of "little children" in another, of "obedient children" in another, all of which should cause us to appreciate how truly at home we are to be with God as members of His family.

No High Caste of Saintship

We are distinctly told that such as become children of God and members of His family in this dispensation are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Another has very ably and interestingly pointed out that, "No high caste of saintship is there however -- no exclusive aristocracy of heavenly blood. It is a rank open to the lowest and poorest and most simple; only one must be born into it, and born through his own consenting faith. And this is more gracious far than the condition of natural generation. 'I was not asked of what parentage I should be born,' you may have said complainingly; 'or indeed whether I should be born into this world at all.' But you are asked whether you shall receive this Divine nativity; and here you can choose who shall be your Father. Your consent is invited, and, being given, the eternal life is yours. 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.'

"Have you noticed how and why Christ received His title of Son of God? It is a very instructive lesson on this point to study His Divine genealogy. The angel announced to Mary her conception through the Holy Spirit, and then added, 'Therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.' He was named the Son of God because He was begotten of the Spirit of God. And as with Christ so with His followers, since

He is but 'the firstborn among many brethren.' Their sonship comes through their begetting of the Spirit, and they are children of God because new-born of God. This seems to be the doctrine of Scripture, which we reiterate, not for the sake of limiting God's love, or of consigning any of His creatures to a dreary and desolate orphanage; but rather to show how exalted and Divine is the position to which the Gospel invites all, even into a heavenly nativity, into kinship with the Lord of glory."

Obedience the Test of Sonship

Now it is recognized at once that children have a claim and a motive to obedience placed upon them which none others have. For instance, we cannot, say, "Our Father which art in heaven," and say it in the spirit and intelligently, without at the same time recognizing our obligation to do the will of that Father. As has been said, "There is a birth right duty which is stronger than any other that can be mentioned. The tie of blood is a tie of obligation; to be begotten of a father, is to be beholden to that father as to no other being in the universe. And therefore I say that highest obedience can neither be required or fulfilled except we are the sons of God. . . . With the child's first cry of parental recognition comes the instinct of obedience; with the babe's first reading of the name of mother in tender, brooding eyes comes the throb of dependent affection. And the witness of the Spirit is the child's cry of the regenerated soul answering to and owning the call of the Heavenly Father. Do you not see, then, what is secured by this wondrous gift of sonship?"

There is no avoiding the great fact so explicitly set forth in Scripture, that the test of sonship is obedience. Obedience is the logical and natural outcome of our sonship to God. "If ye know that He is righteous," says St. John, "ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is begotten of God." Here then is the family likeness or the ancestral trait that proves us children of God. If this should be wanting, no matter what name we bear, our genealogy is spurious and our faith is vain. "Did you never observe," writes another to a friend, "how remarkably old age brings out family resemblance? I now see my father's lineaments in the looking glass where they never used to appear." Brethren of the Lord Jesus and sons of God may well inquire if their Father's image appears more and more visible every year as they look into the mirror of the Word. Unless we are deepening the lines of kindredship by holy and prolonged obedience it cannot be so. There is no doubt truth in the statement that "There are children that stamp out their father's features by their fleshly indulgences and worldly conformity, and thus despoil themselves of even the faint traces of likeness to him which were found in them as new-born babes. Here is the solemn, practical test of your real ancestry: 'He that doeth righteousness is righteous.' If this mark of kinship be wanting, alas for us! we are but stillborn children, brought forth in death, remaining in death, and never knowing the voice of the living spirit crying within us, Abba, Father!"

According to the Pattern of that Holy One

Again the Apostle touches the keynote of our transformation to God's likeness when he says, "not fashioning yourselves." From one standpoint it may be properly said that the true disciple gives himself over to be fashioned by God, instead of trying to mould himself. He recognizes that he is not even to select the pattern of his life while asking the Lord to fit him to it; but to the contrary, he leaves both the pattern and the fashioning with God alone. All this is beautifully expressed in this connection: "not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance," that is, shaping your conduct by your selfish ambitions and desires, your pride and stubborn will; "but," as rendered by some "according to the pattern of that holy One who hath called you, be ye holy in all manner of conversation." It is then manifest that it is the exchange of self-guidance for the guidance of the Lord; of the human outline or model for the Divine. The saying is a true one, "Every man the architect of his own fortune." But "every man's life a plan of God" is the teaching of the Scriptures concerning the Christian. The words of the Apostle Paul are an example of this, "For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." Therefore every impression of the Spirit on the heart, every stroke of the Divine hand in discipline, every loss and every gain, every trial and every blessing, has this definite aim, to produce the image of Christ in your life, even as the sculptor's chisel brings out the perfect statue from the marble.

We would not, however, ignore the fact of the individual responsibility and share in matter of being transformed to God's image. The Apostle says, "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" -- not by the renewing of the new will. Those who in the beginning surrendered themselves to God, became then the possessors of the new will. But we recognize that the body is regulated by the mind. Therefore the new will says, I must begin with the mind, I must get my mind to see things correctly according to God's will. I will use the Bible and all the providential indications that will give me a knowledge, of God's mind, and I will begin to conform my mind thereto. Thus our minds become gradually fashioned, transformed, into the mind of the Lord. As we come to see increasingly what the will of God is, our minds decide to do His will and our reason plays an important part. Thus the education of the Christian in the school of Christ progresses until at the end of life those who have thoroughly learned the lessons of this school will be those who have been obedient children. Such will have been transformed by the renewing of their minds and will have proved what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Many Fail Because not Fully Surrendered

Another has asked the interesting question: "Why is it that there are comparatively so few eminently Christlike men and women in the Church of God?" And then the questioner goes on to explain in a very able manner that it is because so few are fully surrendered and submitted to God and given over to the doing of His will: "It is not that there are not high aims, and lofty standards, and earnest endeavors among them. No, there are thousands who are zealously affected who still seem to fail of being molded to the image of God. The secret of failure lies, doubtless, in an unsubmitted plan of life. We choose our own sphere of service, our own type of character, our own order of development, and then ask God to work out our plans -- as though the Infinite One could do anything with our little, contracted, disjointed models.

Alas that so many of us want, to make God the executor of our wills; that we insist on holding the reins of His providence, so that while He draws the chariot we may guide its course. The Almighty is only Infinite when He works according to His own determinate counsel. If we think to hamper and harness Him with our petty preferences, we are simply proposing to reduce His omnipotence to impotence. God can not do anything with an unsubmitted will; and if we present ourselves as clay models for Him to execute in marble, instead of offering ourselves as plastic clay for Him to pour into the mould of His eternal purpose, our ideal will remain forever unexecuted. Why, what do we expect, that we are to use God, or let Him use us? That we are to submit proposals to Him, or that we are to submit to His proposals? Noble example was he whose words I have just quoted. He had his campaign all planned, his maps and charts he bore upon his person; the ideal of a Pharisee of the Pharisees he was hastening with impetuous footsteps to fulfil, when suddenly as he neared Damascus, he was struck to the earth, and instantly we find him casting all his plans at Christ's feet, and asking the question, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?' Paul has been called, you know, 'the fusile Apostle,' which means that, like molten iron, he was poured into the matrix of the Divine purpose, and instantly recast. It was literally so. He was fused with a single lightning stroke of Divine, revelation, and in a moment transformed to the will of God.

"The process will be slower with us probably, but it must be the same in fact. We must be melted before we can be molded; we must be fused before we can be fashioned. The old will and purposes and plans must go down, in the subduing fires of the Spirit, even as the old form and fashion of the iron disappears in the liquid burning of the furnace, and then we are ready to be renewed after the image of Him who created us; not fashioning ourselves, but submitting ourselves to be fashioned. Oh that God would bring us to this point even while we ; speak, for He only is able; that we might surrender our wills, our ways, our plans, our purposes, our possessions, our very personality to the Lord, and then be re-stamped into His perfect image. And this is only possible as we have 'the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience,' to use Peter's words. We not merely must obey the Spirit, but we must have the Spirit, by which to obey. An obedient spirit in us is not sufficient, unless we have the spirit of obedience from God. O Holy Spirit, thou fire of heaven, melt us, subdue us, dissolve us, till we shall become utterly plastic to the Master's touch!"

SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE

Dear Brethren

I wish to express my appreciation of the article in the September 1st "Herald," "The Defense of Our Holy Faith." This article is timely and represents a feature of the truth too generally neglected.

Quite often we hear the question: "Is not the belief in God perhaps a dream of the childhood of our race, like the belief in elves and boggarts which once was no less universal? and is not modern Science fast destroying the one as it has already destroyed the other?" Such questions are sometimes asked with flippant eagerness, but more often with anxious dread. It is the last mentioned class that we should be interested in and point out to them the helps obtainable to prove the Biblical account true. As proof that science has

gone but a short way we submit below extracts from an article of a year ago by M. E. Tracy, a prominent Editorial writer:

"Science has taught us how to build great cities, how to harness rivers, how to fly and how to employ natural forces formerly believed beyond control.

"What is more significant, perhaps, science has made us rather drunk with conceit.

"We have glorified man's achievements until a great many of us believe there is nothing else so big, so beautiful or so promising in life.

"Atheism is supposed to bespeak open-mindedness, not to say a superiority of intelligence.

"As a matter of common sense, it is just another way of declaring that man represents all the wisdom there is in existence.

"As another matter of common sense, it is about as positive and cocksure as any belief ever evolved.

"It is not to be denied that men are doing wonderful things to what they have done.

"The things remaining to be done, however, are so much more wonderful that their progress seems small.

"No man has yet been able to rise nine miles above the surface of the earth, or descend 400 feet below the surface of the sea.

"The moon is by all odds our nearest heavenly body, yet no instrument has been devised by which we can see the moon clearer than we can see ordinary objects five miles away with the naked eye.

"The fastest machine we have been able to create travels 300 miles an hour, but if man were to devise a machine that traveled a million miles a minute he would not live long enough to reach the nearest fixed star.

"When you come to size it all up, man has accomplished little to warrant the assumption that he knows a great deal about the universe.

"The earth is an infinitesimal particle of the universe, yet man with all his accomplishments does not know much about the earth.

"He has not been able to bore a hole in the earth two miles deep.

"He has not, indeed, been able to scale the highest hill on earth, though he has tried to do so for several thousand years.

"As a matter of fact, man does not know whether the land he walks on is a crust enclosing hot soup or the disintegrated surface of a solid mass.

"Neither does he know what causes earthquakes and volcanoes.

"When it comes to anything that is more than ten miles down or 100 miles up, man is still dealing with theories and speculations.

"By watching the stars he has been able to gain a certain amount of knowledge of their movements.

"By studying the wind and ocean currents, he has been able to acquire some understanding of the weather.

"He cannot produce a fair day, however, or a thunder shower, much less regulate climate.

"Yet he often rises to remark that he knows how the universe was made and what operates it, throwing down temples, dethroning gods and blasting ancient faiths to prove the point.

"The curious part of it is that man cannot free himself from worshipping something, cannot abandon the conception of Deity without exalting his own kind.

"No matter how rational he may become, he is still a bug of dreams and adoration."

Dr. Paul Rader, Chicago Evangelist, has pointed out that: "After Lord Rosse invented the great telescope that could read newspaper print 30 miles away, the great empty spaces of the north heavens were found to contain but a single star, where before it was believed there were many stars. The invention was widely heralded. Yet Job 26:7 says: 'God stretched out the north over the empty places and hangeth the earth upon nothing.'"

An examination of the foundations of our faith cannot fail to prove them true and increase the sustaining comfort we derive from God's Word.

Christian love and best wishes;

Yours in His service,

G. E. L. -- Colo.

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

Dear Brethren in the Lord:

Just a word of thanksgiving to our dear Father and our glorified Redeemer, for the spiritual fragrance brought unto me in the pages of the Herald of August 1st. While reading the article, "The Life of Oneness with God," I felt as it were, transferred to the hall where Jesus was at supper for the last time with His disciples. O, the sweetness of communion born out of the assimilation of the message of love contained in that Epistle! Here was to be realized, in its tenderest conception; the fullness of our privilege to be permitted, nay, to be invited to "walk with God," to commune with immortal youth, to cherish imperishable, creative, omnipotent Deity.

Surely those who offered such spiritual food to the little flock, must have been in tune with the voice of the beloved Shepherd, and if I am counted worthy to be one of the sheep, then I do thank the Master for the sacred fellowship of the brethren whom He used to send me the message of cheer. O, that we might become more steadfast in our efforts at leading a Christlike life, in our attempts at winning the approving smile of Him who conquered for our sake, in our endeavor at forcing open every avenue of our hearts to the sanctifying love of the God of David.

Please pray for me, dear brethren, as I do pray for you. In your hours of trial, remember that as many as are in Christ this side the veil, so many long to share your burdens, your hardships, counting it all as joy and a foretaste of our glorious association in the enrapturing company of the Maker of the new paradise!

By His grace,

Your grateful brother, I. L. -- Me.

Dear Brother in Christ:

Enclosed find Money Order for \$_____ for which kindly enter the following subscriptions. Also kindly mail a list of your books and pamphlets.

I want to thank you for your kind letters, they have been very encouraging and helpful.' . . . Seven of us have left so far, and I think many more will come out as soon as things quiet down a bit. We are rejoicing in the privilege of freedom, and in the restoration of our Lord and Savior as our Captain instead of man; and also in the privilege of enjoying the beautiful truths our Heavenly Father once gave us through Pastor Russell. Again we have tuned our heaven-given harps; and again the beautiful Song of Moses and the Lamb is welling forth from seven thankful hearts that are overflowing with joy and praises to our Father for His wonderful deliverance from the snare of the fowler.

When I compare our experiences with those of the early Church, I can truly see how God has permitted it all for a test to His people. Gideon's Band has been a helpful lesson to me, specially the water test: the people were led to the brook or channel and went down on their knees to drink; the few that took up the water in their hands and lapped it, were safe, because the light background of the hand revealed every speck of dirt in the water; but how few do thus drink! Many go down on their knees and drink, with their hearts content, thinking themselves safe because it comes from the channel! The Gideon of our army is watching the test and alas, how few pass the test!

We are now being revived spiritually and feel the sweet cleansing influence of the Holy Spirit that we have so long missed, and how much I have prayed and waited for its return only God knows! but in His mercy He has heard our prayers and we are appreciating His love more than ever. When I think of the ten years I lost serving man, when I could have been serving God, it makes me weep. Again I praise His name for having kept you faithful and providing this heavenly food for His starving children through the pages of the "Herald." Everyone of those who read them agree that they are the best they ever read.

I do not mean to take too much of your time, I know you are busy serving the Lord, so I will close, praying the Lord will continue to guide you and use you for the comfort and happiness of His children, and with much Christian love and good wishes from us both,

G. O. -- Mass.

OUR CONVENTION BY THE SEA

Surely the Convention held at Atlantic City, N. J., September 15 and 16, did not fall behind the previous Conventions of the year in the sweetness of Christian fellowship, spiritual fervency and in the spirit of love and brotherly kindness. This season of communion in the Lord was very precious. It was evident that it was the desire for closer fellowship with the Lord and to partake more largely of His spiritual grace that had brought the friends together. And those who come with this purpose upon their hearts are always a means of spiritual uplift to others. Those matters, that lie near to the hearts of God's trusting children, attaining the fullness of Divine favor and joint-heirship with Christ in the Kingdom, were given earnest consideration.

Indeed the earnest contemplation of the Divine instruction as to the present duties, obligations, and ministry of the Church, is what logically engages the hearts and thoughts of consecrated brethren in Christ when they gather in such conferences. Those features of the Christian faith -- such as our heavenly calling, the trials and testings of the Church; her present development into the character-likeness of the Lord, and her final gathering together unto Him, were elaborated upon to the strengthening and general encouragement of those present. About fifty of the friends thus assembled at Atlantic City from various surrounding places, rejoiced in their privilege of speaking often one to, another, in the hope that they might be numbered among those who shall be really and truly the Lord's in this time when He is making up His jewels.