

New Testament Church Principles

Notes of Lectures given in Bermuda to a Weekly Class
of Bible Students during Spring Term 1953

by Arthur G. Clarke

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by ARTHUR G. CLARKE

Foreword

It gives me much pleasure to write a foreword commending the Bible Notes written by Mr. A. G. Clarke on certain basic doctrines of the New Testament. I have read them with profit and hope they will have a wide circulation. If the members of local assemblies are to be built up in the faith once for all delivered to the saints, it is necessary that they be instructed in the principles declared by the Apostles in their letters to the churches. There is a sad tendency today to lessen interest in doctrine, but it is essential to know the mind of the Lord as revealed in the Scriptures concerning the Christian's life, walk, fellowship and service. Only so can the children of God be established and maintain an effective witness.

The notes as now issued provide an intelligent starting-point in the study of the Word, and it is hoped that by diligent reading of the indicated scriptures and application of the Truth, young Christians especially will be helped to a fuller and more useful service for God, growing both in grace and in knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

G. J. HYDE.

Acknowledgment by the Editor of “Precious Seed”

Grateful memories of help and encouragement received when a young believer from Mr. A. G. Clarke ensures that anything from his pen is of interest to me. When it was learned that notes of lectures given in Bermuda had been preserved I was eager to read them. On doing so it became immediately apparent that here was a most valuable re-statement of Scripture teaching regarding the local church. My next impression was of the enormous amount of preparatory work entailed in compressing so comprehensive, sane and balanced a presentation of the truth in such comparatively small compass. Whilst, no doubt, the appreciation and profit of the students for whom the lectures were designed justified the amount of conscientious labour involved, it was felt that the Notes not only deserved but would meet a cordial reception in a more extensive field. We were accordingly glad to have permission to reproduce them in “Precious Seed,” a bi-monthly magazine for promoting the study of scriptural church principles. The enthusiastic welcome received from our readers amply confirmed our conviction. The Notes have already proved particularly helpful to keen young Christians eager for a plain and concise treatment of this wide subject. It is gratifying to learn that they will now be available in more permanent form, for we are confident that with God’s continued blessing they will remain a means of edification for a long while to come. As the Notes are intended to induce study, we are sure the author has done well to retain the terse style.

JAMES H. LARGE,

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Teignmouth, Devon,

Introduction

The sub-title sufficiently indicates the origin of these "Notes." More recently they have been reproduced as a series of articles in the magazine "Precious Seed," the editor of which, in a short word of explanation to readers, mentions that the terse style of the original was retained so that much ground could be covered in a minimum of space. The same reason applies to the set-up of the present booklet. Moreover as a convenient little handbook quick reference is thereby facilitated. The editor of the magazine rightly added that closer attention is consequently called for. All Scripture passages indicated should be diligently turned to and prayerfully considered in the spirit of the Bereans (Acts 17. 11). It is hardly to be expected that all will agree with interpretations under the heading "Misunderstood Texts." In a class of keen Bible students it is not helpful to by-pass difficulties. In any case they will probably be brought forward at question time. Greater confidence is promoted if the leader will state his views with conviction yet without dogmatism.

So many friends have expressed appreciation of the help afforded in these "Notes" that it was decided to issue them in booklet form in the hope that others, too, may find spiritual profit therein. The Lord grant it be so to the glory of His Name.

The compiler owes an immense debt of gratitude to highly-esteemed servants of Christ of this and of a former generation, whose teachings, oral and written, under God have contributed so much to a better understanding of the Holy Scriptures on these important themes.

A. G. CLARKE.

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THE CHURCH AND THE CHURCHES

INTRODUCTION. The Word of God is sole and sufficient guidance for the people of God, 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17. All doctrine and practice must be tested by the "Thus saith the Lord."

DEFINITION. What is the meaning of "Church?"

1. **Popular Misconceptions**—that it is a material building (consecrated or not)—that it is an organized society of professed Christians bearing some distinctive name, or governed by some ordained form of control. These are ideas quite foreign to Scripture.

2. **Scriptural Conception**—Gk. "*ecclesia*" signifies lit. an "out-calling," i.e. a called-out company, an assembly; used in Scripture of (a) Israel, Acts 7. 38; (b) an Ephesian mob, 19. 32; (c) a city assembly at Ephesus, 19. 39; (d) the Church of God as called out from the world. First occurrence, Matt. 16. 18.

COMPOSITION. What constitutes the "Church" or a "Church"? Distinguish between:—

1. **The "Church" Universal**, composed solely of true believers on the Lord Jesus Christ—those born again by the Spirit of God—the invisible, indivisible, inviolable company of the redeemed of this present age. (a) Origination, Eph. 3. 3-12; Col. 1. 24-27; (b) Inauguration, Matt. 16. 18; Acts 2 (consequent upon Christ's work on the Cross); (c) Completion (at the Coming), 1 Thess. 4. 13-18.

2. **A "Church" Local**, composed of a company of professed believers in any locality, gathering simply in the name of Christ (simplest form, Matt. 18. 20) and owning a threefold authority; (a) The Headship of the Lord Jesus; (b) The Control of the Holy Spirit; (c) The Teaching of the Word of God. Only true believers are primarily contemplated, 1 Cor. 1. 2, but unbelievers may creep in, Acts 8. 21; 20. 29; 2 Pet. 2. 1; Jude 4. Mixed memberships are wholly unscriptural. For local aspect of "church" see Acts 8. 1; 13. 1; Rev. 2. 1, 8; etc. For use in the plural see Acts 15. 41; 16. 5; 1 Cor. 7. 17; Rev. 2. 7; 22. 16. Such companies are called (a) "Churches of God," 1 Thess. 2. 14—indicating Origin and Ownership; (b) "Churches of Christ," Rom. 16. 6, indicating Redemption and Responsibility; (c) "Churches of the saints," 1 Cor. 14. 22, indicating Composition and Character; (d) "Churches of the Gentiles," Rom. 16. 4, indicating Scope and Sovereignty, Acts 15. 14; 9. 15.

FUNCTION. What is the character of the church and what purpose does it serve? This is indicated by various descriptive terms (analogies).

1. **The Church Universal.** Ever to be viewed in relation to Christ as designed of God to subserve His eternal purpose for the glory of His Son, Eph. 1. 13; 3. 10, 11; Col. 1. 18b. Men often speak of "The Church" as if it were a separate entity and authority.

(a) *Body*. Rom. 12. 4, 5 ; 1 Cor. 12. 12, 13 ; Eph. 1. 22, 23 ; 4. 4 ; Col. 1. 18. In *Ephesians* the Body is seen as the complement of the Head ; in *Colossians* as complete in the Head. Vital unity is the basic thought. Christ as Head is (i) Seat of the Church's life, "in Whom" Eph. 1. 11, 13 ; (ii) Source of the Church's nourishment, "from Whom," Eph. 4. 16 ; (iii) Supervisor of the Church's activities, "into Him," Eph. 4. 15. Through members of the Body the Head finds expression ; they carry out His will. Note there is unity of the whole but variety of function in its members.

(b) *Building*. Eph. 2. 19-22. A spiritual edifice, a holy temple (shrine=sanctuary) designed by God as a "habitation." Basic thought, divine indwelling (contrast Rev. 18. 2, only other occurrence of Gk.). (i) Architect (responsible for plan), Eph. 1. 4, 22 ; 2 Tim. 1. 9 ; (ii) Builder, Matt. 16. 18 (cf. 1 Cor. 3. 11) ; (iii) Rock Foundation, Matt. 16. 18 (cf. 1 Cor. 3. 11) ; (iv) Foundation Stones, Eph. 2. 20 ; (v) Living Stones, 1 Pet. 2. 5 ; (vi) Chief Corner-stone (Keystone, not of arch, but of pyramid or dome), Eph. 2. 20 ; 1 Pet. 2. 6 ; (vii) Inhabiter, Eph. 2. 22. O.T. type—the Temple. In some Scriptures the idea of a building merges into that of

(c) *House or Household*, 1 Pet. 2. 4-10 ; 4. 17 ; 1 Tim. 3. 15 ; Heb. 3. 6 ; 10. 21 ; Eph. 2. 19 ; Gal. 6. 10. Basic thoughts—Responsibility and Discipline. O.T. Type—the Tabernacle with its Priesthood and Levitical service.

(d) *Bride*. The term "Bride of Christ" is not found in Scripture, but many see it implied in Eph. 5. 28-32, etc. Basic thought would be that of Consortship in mutual devotion, loving companionship and as sharing dominion. O.T. Type, Gen. 1. 26, 28 ; 2. 21-24. In this view the Church is seen in its heavenly and eternal character, Rev. 19. 7 ; 21. 2, 9. This would also identify the Church as a

(e) *City*. Rev. 21. 2-10. In relation to Christ—Bride. In relation to (a) the Earth in millennial age, and (b) the New Earth in the eternal state—a city. Basic thought—administrative centre.

(f) *Flock*. John 10. 16 (contrast "fold," 1. 16 ; John 21. 15-17. Basic thought—unceasing care. "A fold is a circumference without a centre, a flock has a centre without a circumference" (H.P.B.)

(g) *New Man*. Eph. 2. 11-18 ; is associated with (a) and (f), John 10. 16. Basic thought—complete reconciliation. "In Christ" Jew and Gentile are no longer separated but created one. There are no racial or social distinctions, 1 Cor. 12. 13 ; Col. 3. 10, 11. All men are reached through the gospel on equal terms.

2. A Church Local. The use of similar terms both for a local assembly and the Church universal clearly indicates that in the mind of God the former is a local expression of the whole.

(a) *Body*. 1 Cor. 12. 27—not now “*the Body*” nor “*a Body*,” but Christ’s body in character ; what is true of the whole in this analogy is true of the local assembly. Though subjection of the body to the Head is implied, note that the emphasis is now upon loving unity, mutual affinity and co-ordinated activity, verse 21 and whole context.

(b) *Building*. 1 Cor. 3. 9 (double significance—process and product) ; a sacred habitation (Sanctuary, 16—not *the* Sanctuary, not *a* Sanctuary, but God’s Sanctuary in character). Holiness is a dominant idea.

(c) *Tillage*. 1 Cor. 3. 9 (again a double significance—process and product)—a cultivated plot. Fruitfulness the prominent thought.

(d) *Virgin*. 2 Cor. 11. 2 (“ I espoused you ” cannot refer to the church universal). Purity and constancy emphasised.

(e) *Flock* (Gk. *poimnion*). Acts 20. 28 ; 1 Pet. 5. 2, 3 (diminutive used because local aspect). Constant loving care indicated.

(f) *Lampstand*. Rev. 1-3. Assembly is seen as a vessel of testimony. LIP. Witness by word.

(g) *Epistle*. 2 Cor. 3. 3. Assembly a means of testimony. LIFE. Witness by walk.

CHAPTER 2.

THE CHURCH AND THE CHURCHES (*continued*)

It seems desirable to add to the previous lesson some further explanation on the subject of the *local church's relationships* :—

1. *To the Lord*. Basic thought—*Subjection*. Analogies (Lesson 1) bring out various aspects of this—Rev. chs. 1-3 also, where the risen Christ is seen “ in the midst ” of the assemblies as sole Supervisor—each assembly responsible directly to Him and He deals directly with each assembly. The only links between assemblies are in the *one* Lord (Eph. 4. 5) as controlling Head, and *one* Spirit (Eph. 4. 4) as the indwelling power for testimony (*oil*).

2. *To other Assemblies*. Basic thought—*Intercommunion*. Should be close and happy fellowship between all—N.T. shows constant coming and going of servants of God for ministry and believers visiting for various purposes. But there is *no* federation of churches, *no* limited circle of assemblies (with or without special names), *no* man-made organization, and *no* central authority, whether “ mother ” church or ecclesiastical council, representative committee or any other form of administrative body.

3. *To the World*. Basic thought—*Separation*. The Church is an *ecclesia* (called-out-ones).

(a) *By individual election*, Jn. 17. 14-16 ; 15. 19 ; Gal. 1. 4 ; Col. 3. 12.

(b) *By collective constitution* as the church of God, a people for His Name (Acts 15. 14 ; Tit. 2. 14).

"Holy," i.e. separated unto God from all world systems, for "the *whole* 'Kosmos' lies in the wicked one" (1 Jn. 5. 19)—social world—political world—religious world, pagan or so-called "Christian." See clear command, 2 Cor. 6. 14, 16, 18.

Assembly Gatherings. It is significant that whilst, under the Law, Israel's daily life and religious exercises were regulated by plain commandments down to the last detail—a service which "gendered" to bondage (Gal. 4. 24)—the church has the privilege of a service of sonship in joyful liberty (Gal. 5. 1 ; 2 Cor. 3. 17 and context). No festival seasons or fast days are enjoined, and no command whatever to Christians as to *times* and *places* of meetings, Col. 2. 16, 17 ; Gal. 4. 8-11 ; Rom. 14, 5-7.

Nevertheless we are not left without guidance in the **example of early believers**, recorded surely for our instruction. We find they met

1. **For the Breaking of Bread**, Acts 2. 42 ; 20, 1-7 ; 1 Cor. 11. 23-32. This is the primary object of the assembly gathering. See Lessons 4 and 5.

2. **For Collective Worship.** Although there seems no concrete example in N.T. except as connected with other exercises especially (1), it is clearly implied (in the collective sense as well as individual) in the fulfilment of our functions as a holy priesthood. See Lesson 6 ; cf. Jn. 1. 23, 24 ; 1 Pet. 2. 5 ; Heb. 13. 15 ; 10. 19-25 ; Acts 2. 47 (first sentence).

3. **For United Prayer.** Acts 2. 42 ; e.g. 4. 24ff ; 12. 5, 12.

4. **For Scripture Reading and Ministry.** Acts 2. 42 ; 1 Tim. 4. 13 ; 1 Cor. 14 ; Col. 4. 16 ; Acts 15. 30, 31 ; 20. 7. For Ministry see Lesson 9 and cf. O.T. example Neh. 8.

5. **For Reports.** Acts 4. 23 (local) ; 14. 26-28 (missionary) ; 15. 3, 4.

6. **For Discipline.** 1 Cor. 5. 4. See Lesson 10. A sad necessity is this.

7. **For Social Intercourse.** Note that the fellowship of their "own company" was sought, Acts 2. 46 ; 4. 23, 32 ; Jude 12 ; 2. Pet. 2. 13. The "agape" was principally a social meal, a holy practice, too often neglected in these days to the detriment of a happier fellowship.

CHAPTER 3.

THE ORDINANCES—(A) BAPTISM

The Lord Jesus appointed *two ordinances* only for His Church, viz. Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Rome has added five others (Confirmation, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders and Matrimony) without the least warrant from Scripture. We observe the last not because it is specifically of the church order but of the creation order, whereas Rome refuses to recognize marriage outside her "church."

1. **Divine Authority.** Christ's clear command in the Great Commission, Matt. 28. 19, 20 ; Mark 16. 15, 16. Making disciples, baptizing and teaching, form a composite charge, no part of which must be disregarded.

2. **Apostolic Practice.** Trace in the Book of Acts the invariable order following our Lord's mandate ; see especially 2. 41 ; 8. 12, 36-38 ; 18. 8. (For "making-disciples" see Acts 14. 21). Unbaptized believers are never contemplated in the N.T.

3. **Proper Subjects.** *All* believers in the Lord Jesus Christ were baptized and *no others*. In present-day circumstances it is generally advisable to have confirmatory evidence that a person is a true believer before baptizing him. In many mission-fields this procedure has been proved absolutely necessary. A too-hurried acceptance of a "candidate" may be a definite hindrance to his own spiritual welfare.

4. **Appointed Method.** This is clearly manifest from (a) the meaning of the word, and (b) the significance of the rite.

(a) *Meaning of the Word.*—The English form is a transliteration of the Gk. not a translation—from "bapto," to dip (Lk. 16. 24 ; Jn. 13. 26 ; Rev. 19. 13)—"baptizo," an intensive form, to dip thoroughly. These words never mean to sprinkle or to pour—all standard lexicons give the meaning indicated and Scripture use confirms (see Acts 8. 38 ; carefully note procedure, Jn. 3. 23).

(b) *Significance of the rite*—Rom. 6. 4. Burial and resurrection of the believer with Christ is set forth—involving immersion and emersion. Sprinkling a few grains of earth upon a body, cannot by any argument be rightly called a burial !

Question of formula. Matt. 28. 19 is in force until "the end of the age" (v. 20). Apostolic practice (Acts) in no case gives the formula. The fact is recorded that they baptized converts by the command of the Lord Jesus. Where preposition "eis" is used it indicates "into association with" (8. 16 ; 19. 5) Christ, and necessarily involves the doctrine of Matt. 28. 19, so no discrepancy appears. Finally, there is but one baptism (Eph. 4. 5). Neither different modes, nor one for Jew and another for Gentile, are recognized in Scripture.

5. **Doctrinal Import.** Basic teaching is identification with Christ. The believer's standing before God is "in Christ" a new creation (2 Cor. 5. 17). God reckons him therefore to have shared Christ's death, burial and resurrection, appropriately symbolized by water-baptism. The "old man" (Adam nature) with all its deeds has been judged, sentenced and executed in the cross of Christ, buried out of God's sight, and the believer is viewed as a "new man" introduced into the sphere of resurrection-life with Christ, Eph. 2. 5, 6. He is therefore responsible henceforth to walk in "newness of life," reckoning himself to have died unto sin and to be alive unto God, Rom. 6. 3-11. In submitting to the rite of baptism, the believer publicly confesses his acceptance of God's

viewpoint and faith's resolve to live accordingly. For further teaching on the practical side of this truth, see Eph. 4. 2-25ff ; Col. 3. 8-10 ; Rom. 13. 14, etc. (In baptism we proclaim our death with Christ ; in the Lord's Supper, Christ's death for us.)

6. Prevalent Malpractices.

(a) *Infant Sprinkling*. Not only is this not a true " baptism " (4), but it is associated with the destructive heresy of " baptismal regeneration," which teaches that the child thereby becomes " a child of God," " a member of Christ " and an " inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." It leads people to trust in a ceremony instead of in Christ for salvation.

(b) *Household Baptism*. This error inculcates the idea that persons so baptized are brought into a place of special privilege and blessing. It is compared to the Jewish rite of circumcision, but the true analogy is that as natural birth determined the Jew's nationality and was followed by the distinctive sign in declaration of the fact, just so the new birth determines the believer's heavenly citizenship and baptism is the appointed public sign. In neither case does the rite itself procure the coveted privilege—circumcision does not make a Jew for it was practised by certain other peoples of the East, and baptism does not make a Christian (Acts 8. 13 ; cf. 1 Cor. 10. 1-6). Examples of households baptized are mentioned, Acts 10. 44-48 ; 16. 14, 15 ; 16. 29-34 ; 18. 8 ; 1 Cor. 1. 16 with 16. 15. That infants were included is a wholly unjustified assumption, for note Acts 16. 32, 34 and 18. 8. If old enough to " hear the Word," " believe " and " rejoice " in salvation, then young folk old enough for baptism.

(c) *Baptism Ignored*. Certain sects teach that water-baptism is wholly unnecessary, and that the Spirit's baptism alone is essential. These surely forget that the Lord specifically enjoined the rite. See also Acts 10. 45-47 where reception of the Spirit is followed by water-baptism.

(d) *Re-baptizing Unnecessary*. After conversion, if the person has been previously sprinkled or immersed, some hold that re-baptizing is not necessary. See, however, Acts 19. 4, 5 and the pertinent question " Unto what . . . baptized ? " Paul's words supplemented John's incomplete teaching concerning Christ, which could not have included the facts of His death, resurrection and consequent giving of the Holy Spirit. Now, believing the full gospel, these men were baptized " into the Name of the Lord Jesus."

7. Misunderstood Texts.

(a) *Jn. 3. 5*. In the N.T. baptism is never connected with the new birth. The Lord is referring to Ezek. 36. 24-27 ; 37. 1-14 ; which Nicodemus as a " teacher of Israel " should immediately have perceived.

(b) *Acts 2. 38*. Read with emphasis upon " repentance " not on " baptism," in accord with Luke 24. 47, R.V.m. Repentance is prominent in the message to these Jews, for they were called upon " to change mind " with regard to Jesus whom they had crucified

In a similar message to Gentiles, prominence is given to faith (Acts 10. 43). Repentance and faith are like the two sides of one coin, Acts 20. 21.

(c) *Acts* 22. 16. Water cannot wash away sins. Saul is called upon publicly to repudiate his past life, especially deeds of opposition to Christ. The same word and the same idea are present in 1 Cor. 6. 11 ; see R.V.m.

(d) 1 *Cor.* 1. 13-17. In evangelizing the city of Corinth, Paul refrained from several legitimate things on the score that they were not expedient (i.e. not profitable to hearers) as events proved. It is apparent that the apostle usually left the baptizing to others lest a party spirit and pride be engendered. The converts were not Paul's but Christ's (cf. Jn. 4. 2).

(e) 1 *Cor.* 15. 29. This is one of the concluding arguments in the chapter for the truth of the resurrection. If there be no resurrection, then the rite of baptism is reduced to sheer absurdity—a ceremony in the interests of a lot of dead people, now dead spiritually and soon to be dead physically, with no hope beyond the grave. This would justify the attitude expressed at the end of 32. (In the view of Dr. J. W. Thirtle and one or two other commentators, this verse is to be understood in reference to newly-baptized converts. Such are looked upon as being like courageous young soldiers eagerly pressing forward to take the place of warriors fallen on the battle-front—the martyred believers. They are baptized in the place of, or in succession to them. If there be no resurrection, such courage is exhibited in vain ; nothing is to be gained by it now or hereafter. This line of argument is thus closely linked with that in the next verse.)

(f) 1 *Pet.* 3. 20, 21. Noah's ark in the O.T. and baptism in the N.T. are corresponding figures of God's way of salvation through faith alone—committing oneself wholly to the Saviour, as Noah committed himself to the ark and so was borne safely through the judgment. Noah and his family were separated from the older creation and stepped out on a new world with new covenant terms.

8. Other Baptisms. These must be distinguished from Christian baptism dealt with above.

(a) *Ceremonial Purifications.* Another Greek word (" baptismos ") is generally used, Mk. 7. 4, 8 ; Heb. 6. 2 ; 9. 10 ; but the verb " baptizo " is found in Mk. 7. 4 and Lk. 11. 38.

(b) *John's Baptism.* This was " unto repentance " and a confessing of sins (Matt. 3. 6, 11) preparatory to the advent of Messiah through whose blood-shedding alone could come remission of sins. John's was a unique commission (Jn. 1. 33).

(c) *Christ's own Baptism,* Matt. 3. 13-17, identified Him as the true Messiah, Jn. 1. 31-34—the Cross finally established His claims, 1 Jn. 5. 6.

(d) *Disciples' Baptism,* Jn. 3. 22, 26 with 4. 1, 2. This involved adherence to Jesus as Messiah, but not all these disciples " continued," 6. 66 ; 7. 31 ff.

(e) *Baptism of Suffering*, Mk. 10. 38, 39 ; Lk. 12. 50. This expression points to Christ's immersion in the deep soul-experience of the Cross, overwhelmed by the billows of divine judgment vicariously endured in behalf of His people. The later death of James and John was not vicarious but they were granted the privilege of suffering in fellowship with their Lord.

(f) *Baptism of the Holy Spirit*, Jn. 1. 33 ; Mk. 1. 8 ; Acts 1. 5 ; 1 Cor. 12. 13. This was fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 2) when believers were incorporated into a spiritual entity, a "body" able to make increase of itself until reaching full maturity, Eph. 4. 13, 16. After the initial act at conversion, no such thing as a later or second *baptism* of the Spirit is known in Scripture.

(g) *Baptism of Fire*, Matt. 3. 11 ; Lk. 3. 16. This points not to Pentecost but to future judgment, as the following verses show.

Note that (e), (f) and (g) exhibit a metaphorical sense of the word "baptism.")

9. Brief Summary. Baptism is

(a) *An Act of Submission*—obedience to the Lord's command ;

(b) *An Act of Confession*—owning the Lordship of Christ, Rom. 10. 9, cf. Gal. 3. 27. It is a public confession, like a soldier who dons the Queen's uniform upon enlistment. The uniform does not make him a soldier but it makes his calling evident to all.

(c) *An Act of Identification*—symbolizing death, burial and resurrection with Christ, to walk with and serve the Lord in a new sphere, the "heavenlies" (Eph. 2. 6).

(d) *An Act of Proclamation*, in that it clearly sets forth the gospel message through "eye-gate," 1 Cor. 15. 3, 4.

CHAPTER 4.

THE ORDINANCES—(B) THE LORD'S SUPPER

"*The Lord's Supper*" (1 Cor. 11. 20) is termed also "*Breaking of Bread*" (Acts 2. 42). It is primarily a common expression for partaking of a meal, and is so used in Scripture (Acts 2. 46 ; 20. 11 ; 27. 35, 36 ; cf. Mk. 6. 41, etc.). "Bread" is lit. loaf, for the dividing of which the Jews did not use a knife. Later, the phrase "The breaking of the loaf" came to have special reference to the observance of the Lord's Supper.—"*Eucharist*" is a non-Scriptural term, but closely connects with one of the principal acts at the Supper, namely "thanksgiving" (Gk. *eucharistia*), and but for its ritualistic associations could not be considered objectionable.—"*(Holy) Communion*," a term based upon 1 Cor. 10. 16, expresses certain aspects of the Supper. The wholly idolatrous conception of the "Mass," as practised in the Roman Church, will be dealt with later.

INSTITUTION. In the N.T. we have four records of this, Matt. 26. 26-30 (dispensational order); Mk. 14. 22-26 (chronological order); Lk. 22. 14-23 (moral order); 1 Cor. 11. 17-34 (essential order). With three other passages relating thereto (Acts 2. 42; 20. 7; 1 Cor. 10. 16, 17) there are *seven* references in all. The parting command, "This do" (Lk. 22. 19; 1 Cor. 11. 24, 25), was twice spoken and is thrice recorded.

EXEMPLIFICATION. The practice of early disciples is clearly indicated Acts 2. 42; 20. 7; 1 Cor. 10. 16. Writings from sub-apostolic times frequently refer to the importance of this ordinance and show the universality of its observance among Christians. The churches soon departed from the first simplicity of the Scriptural pattern, however, and there gradually developed in certain circles a highly-elaborate ritual often associated with definitely idolatrous practices. The breaking of bread is a collective exercise, and continued regularly, whereas baptism is a single initiatory rite for the individual believer (Lesson 3).

PARTICIPATION. It is most important to recognize that only true believers in our Lord Jesus Christ are entitled to partake of the Lord's Supper. Participation by doubtful adherents and even known unbelievers as thereby receiving the very "means of grace" is wholly contrary to sound doctrine. See Acts 20. 7, "disciples"; 2. 41, 42, "they that received His word . . . baptized . . . continued stedfastly . . . in the breaking of bread." Here we may point out other terms designating the same class, viz. "believers," Acts 5. 14; "Christians," 11. 26; "brethren" 11. 29; "saints," Rom. 1. 7. Moreover, only believers sound in the faith and godly in their walk should be welcomed, 1 Cor. 5. 11; 2 Jn. 9-11; Tit. 3. 10, 11; 2 Thess. 3. 6, 14, etc. If evidence is forthcoming of these requirements there is no warrant in the Word of God for imposing any further restrictions whatsoever. On the other hand, it is not consistent with godly order to issue a general invitation to the assembled company for anyone who wishes to participate. There should be real personal exercise of heart on the part of each believer concerned.

SIGNIFICATION. This may be exhibited in a seven-fold way. The Lord's Supper is

1. **A Gathering of His Church.** 1 Cor. 11. 17-21. The breaking of bread is not a subordinate gathering of the assembly—a mere appendage to other services. On the contrary it is the normal gathering of Christians, the very central feature of the Christian order of worship. Acts 20. 7 strongly indicates this, and is supported by 1 Cor. chs. 11-14, in which chapters the term "come together" occurs just seven times and nowhere else in Scripture of the church meeting. In Troas the disciples gathered for the specific purpose of "breaking bread." They did not gather to hear the famous missionary-preacher Paul. Remembrance of the Lord in the manner He Himself had enjoined was the governing thought in the hearts and minds of the believers. In denominational "churches" the central point of a meeting for "divine

worship " or " public worship " is the sermon, which is not worship in the scriptural sense at all. The Supper beautifully expresses the oneness of the Body of Christ, the Church ; the union of that Body in all its individual members (a) with the risen Head in heaven and (b) with one another ; also the communion flowing therefrom, 1 Cor. 10. 16, 17 (R.V., m.). Note the double significance of the one loaf (a) as symbolizing His own precious body, 1 Cor. 11. 24, and (b) as symbolizing His mystic Body, the Church, 1 Cor. 10. 16, 17. The reversed order of cup and loaf here gives the order of the believer's experience, i.e. first, appropriation of the merits of the atoning blood (" cup ") then the resulting membership of the " body " (loaf) ; 1 Cor. 11 gives the order of observance.

2. **A Memorial of His Person**, 1 Cor. 11. 24, 25, R.V. Note " This do," i.e. it is not a matter of retrospection simply but an *act* of commemoration, and that not of His death but of His Person (" for a remembrance of ME "). It should not therefore be compared to a memorial service for a long-dead national hero or a notable martyr in a great cause. We gather on the first day of the week, the Lord's resurrection-day, not on the day of His death, and ours is the joyful celebration of One who having accomplished the atoning work of the Cross, rose triumphant from the tomb and ascended to the right hand of God. Moreover, we commemorate Him not so much as a long-absent One but as One ever-living and graciously present according to His own promise, Matt. 18. 20.

3. **A Token of His Love**, 1 Cor. 11. 23 (" the night in which He was betrayed "), cf. Jn. 13. 1. Love delights to *serve* and to *give*, Matt. 20. 28 ; Lk. 22. 19 ; Jn. 10. 11, and is measured by the extent of its sacrifice. As we partake of the Supper, the Lord is afforded an opportunity to impart a further impulse to our devotion to Him in a fresh realization of His love.

4. **A Pledge of His Covenant**, 1 Cor. 11. 25 ; Lk. 22. 20. Every divine covenant mentioned in Scripture has its distinctive sign, e.g. the sign of the Mosaic Covenant given to Israel was the weekly sabbath, Ex. 31. 13, 17 ; Ezek. 20. 12, 20. The " sign " of the New Covenant is the cup of which we partake at the Supper, Lk. 22. 20, for it symbolizes His blood shed in ratification of it ; see Heb. 9. 15-22. For further teaching on the New and (better) Covenant see Heb. 7. 22 ; 8. 6-13 ; 10. 16-18 ; 12. 24 ; 13. 20 ; 2 Cor. 3. 6-18.

5. **A Partaking of His Feast**, 1 Cor. 11. 26 (" eat . . . drink "). Some are averse from referring to the Lord's Supper as a " feast." Rightly understood, however, there seems no valid objection to the term. It surely is a fitting occasion for believers to express the joy of their reconciliation to God (Lk. 15. 22-24) made possible only on the ground of the death of His Son for us (Rom. 5. 10, 11 ; cf. the significance of the peace-offering, Lev. chs. 3 and 7). Personal participation is indicated by the four imperatives, " Take—eat—drink—do." The Lord's Supper is symbol of a broader concept—the Lord's Table (1 Cor. 10. 21). These are not interchangeable terms, though we often treat them as such. The " table " repre-

sents fellowship in all the gracious provision the Lord has made for His redeemed people. At this the believer is always "sitting" (cf. Psa. 23. 5), but he sits at the Supper but once weekly. 1 Cor. 10 contrasts the "table of the Lord" with the "table of demons," which latter stands for all the worldly provision the devil prepares for his devotees, even in the moral and religious spheres. The Christian should have no fellowship whatever with such. He should do nothing to compromise his testimony for God before the world or to stumble a weaker brother (see context). Christ Himself is the unseen Host and Ruler of "the feast" (Jn. 2. 9). The table is spread by Him at great cost to Himself, but freely to us. "Table" also speaks of abundant grace and a generous sufficiency, 2 Sam. 9.

6. **A Proclamation of His Death**, 1 Cor. 11. 26, R.V. The A.V. word "show" has been misunderstood and is often cited as "show forth." The Gk. however indicates not representation but proclamation, not showing to God but witnessing to men. It is the gospel in object-lesson, 1 Cor. 15. 3, 4. The same Gk. word is used 2. 1 ; 9. 14 and often elsewhere in the sense of "to preach." We have already seen that baptism also is a gospel testimony through eyegate, the emphasis being upon resurrection, whilst the Supper stresses the death of our Lord. The combined witness of the two ordinances is very striking. It has been pointed out that the announcing is not in the "breaking" of the loaf but in the eating and drinking (text). We may perhaps see the death of our Lord already set forth in the separation of the loaf (body) and the cup (blood). Both the fact and the significance of His death are announced in the carrying out of the ordinance.

7. **A Prophecy of His Coming**, 1 Cor. 11. 26. "Till He come" is Paul's inspired comment. Here is the glorious consummation for which we look. It sets a limit upon the observance of the ordinance, so precious to all true believers. It is also a clear indication that obedience to the Lord's parting command must not be neglected in this waiting time.

"Backward look we, drawn to Calvary, musing while we sing ;
Forward haste we to Thy coming, Lord and King."

CHAPTER 5.

THE ORDINANCES—(B) THE LORD'S SUPPER (*continued*)

CELEBRATION. The keynote is *simplicity* according to the scriptural pattern. Departure is seen in Christendom, grievous errors and ritualistic practices having obscured the original meaning. Loose observance also destroys its true character (1 Cor. 11. 20ff). At first the Supper was observed by Christians in connection with a social meal, later called "love-feast" (Gk. *agape*), Jude 12 ; 2 Pet. 2. 13, R.V. ; 1 Cor. 11. 21, 22. Acts 2. 46 probably shows a necessary arrangement owing to numbers. For worship the Christians still gathered with the rest of the Jews in the temple. The practice shows also that the early communal order did not involve the break up of family life. The appearance of abuses as well as other con-

siderations eventually led to the separation of the Lord's Supper from ordinary and social meals (1 Cor. 11. 34). It is to be regretted that the social character of Christianity is largely lost sight of today. The Word of God avoids laying down laws of celebration. Scope is thereby given to Christian liberty, devotion and obedience.

(1) **Day and Time.** The injunction is "as often" (1 Cor. 11. 25, 26), not "as seldom" or "as often as you may choose." This indicates frequency, not a yearly observance (as was the Jewish Passover), or thrice yearly or monthly. Acts 20. 7 denotes regular practice, the disciples meeting on the first day of the week for this specific purpose. Paul had arrived at Troas the previous Monday but, though his journey was urgent (b. 16), he called no special meeting but patiently waited till the ensuing Lord's Day, after which he departed without further loss of time (vv. 11, 13). It is significant that our Lord first appeared to His own on His resurrection day and on successive "first-of-the-week" days, symbolic of the "new creation" day, whereas the Jewish Sabbath looked back to the old creation order. Gk. "kuriakos" (only twice in the N.T.) links the Lord's Supper and the Lord's Day (1 Cor. 11. 20; Rev. 1. 10). 1 Cor. 16. 1, 2 gives indirect support. The word "supper" need not determine the time of day. It is fitting that worship and breaking of bread should have first place in all Christian exercises.

(2) **Elements.** Controversy over their composition is to be eschewed. It was at the Passover meal that our Lord instituted His supper, but the two must not be confounded. He took a loaf of bread and a cup of wine as simple elements ready to hand. The emphasis in N.T. is never on "bread" and "wine" but always on "loaf" and "cup" as fitting symbols of the Lord's vicarious death. With us the elements are already set aside before we gather. In scripture no lesson is drawn either from the composition of the bread or contents of the cup. The wisdom of this arrangement is appreciated in lands where wheaten loaves and grape juice are unobtainable. The modern practice of cut wafers and individual cups, however, quite destroys the significance of the Supper as a "communion" of the one Body.

(3) **Distribution.** In the Scripture regulating the order of this gathering (1 Cor. chs. 11-14) it is important to notice that no president, whether leading elder or other "official" person, is seen. The claim to have special authority to administer the elements entirely alters the character of the Supper, and is plainly contrary to the Word of God. Even apostles had no official status in this respect, but simply took their place with the rest of the saints. Acts 20. 11 is no exception as this refers to taking an ordinary meal (verbs all in the singular, denoting individual acts)—Luke and others had probably already gone aboard ship (v. 13). Clerisy today is strongly entrenched behind this unscriptural practice of allowing only "ordained" ministers or other appointed persons to "officiate."

(4) Regulation. In 1 Cor. 11. 17 to 14. 40, Paul deals with disorders in the gathering of the church and gives divine regulations for (a) Observance of the Lord's Supper, 11. 17-34 ; (b) Use of Spiritual Gifts, chaps. 12-14 (Their Endowment, 12—Energy, 13—Exercise, 14).

That one gathering is contemplated after the pattern of Acts 20. 7 is here shown by the use of *characteristic words*—(a) "come-together" (Gk. *sunerchomai*) occurring 7 times in the section, not elsewhere in N.T. of the church ; (b) "give-thanks" (Gk. *eucharisteo*) 14. 16, 17 with 11. 24 ; (c) "whole assembly," 14. 23. Most significant is it that the Spirit of God is not mentioned after 12. 13. He retires from view, so to speak, in favour of the Lord Jesus, who is recognized in the midst as Head of His Church and Host at His Supper (Jn. 16. 14). On the other hand, the *personal responsibility* of those taking part is emphasized (21 imperatives used in ch. 14). The often heard expression "leading of the Spirit" occurs only twice in N.T. (Rom. 8. 14 ; Gal. 5. 18) and is connected with the believer's walk, not with worship. However, if not walking by the Spirit during the week one cannot expect to be "led of the Spirit" at the Supper. The Spirit's prompting is not by some supernatural impulse, not by unintelligent zeal and certainly not by a fleshly desire to display gift (all errors seen in the church at Corinth), nor by purely emotional exercise, but through the spiritual understanding and spiritual discernment of spiritual persons (1 Cor. 14. 14, 15, 19, 20). Although the regulation of order is seen primarily in connection with "tongues" and "prophecy" (gifts which have passed) seven *underlying principles* are discernible ; (i) Not everyone is to take part, v. 26 (ironical) ; (ii) Messages are limited to two or three and in turn, vv. 20-31 ; (iii) Speech is to be in language heard and understood, vv. 6-11 ; (iv) Consideration is to be given to other gifted persons present, vv. 30, 31 ; (v) Gift is to be under self-control, vv. 32, 33—the appropriateness or otherwise of what is said being judged by others, not by the speaker concerned, v. 29 ; (vi) Constant aim must be edification, vv. 12, 26—"building up" not "pulling down" ministry—five words fitly spoken may encourage the spirit of worship, v. 19—not vain talking, 1 Tim. 1. 3-7 ; Tit. 1. 9 ; (vii) Everything is to be seemly (in outward deportment) and harmonious (appropriate to the occasion). See 2 Cor. 3. 17—liberty is neither licence nor legality, which are both manifestations of fleshly activity. Persistent offenders against the divine order must be firmly dealt with. If it is merely a question of unintelligent zeal, elders should correct and instruct the erring one in a spirit of patient grace.

(5) Procedure. Breaking the loaf has no ceremonial significance, but is for convenience of the company, esp. if loaf large and crusty, otherwise it *need* not be broken. All "break" it in the sense of partaking (1 Cor. 10. 16, 17) ; our Lord's body was not "broken" (Jn. 19. 36 ; 1 Cor. 11. 24, R.V.). So with the pouring of the wine. Where such is done, no special meaning attaches to the act. In the already separated loaf (body) and cup (blood) we

may see death set forth. All ritual order and use of formulas must be avoided. Insistence on details of no importance only genders strifes, 2 Tim. 2. 23 ; Tit. 3. 9. As with the gospel meeting and all other gatherings of the church, there is nothing secret about the Lord's Supper, in marked contrast to Masonic and other Lodges, which originate in the ancient mystery-cults of paganism (note incidental reference to "many lights," Acts 20. 8 ; cf. 1 Cor. 14. 23-25).

(6) **Preparation.** 1 Cor. 11. 27-32 is of solemn importance. Corinthian excesses may not occur today, but irreverent behaviour and meaningless formality are far too common. Distinguish between *unworthy persons* partaking and *unworthy manner*, which is in view here. A divided fellowship, a discordant spirit, distracting thoughts, disturbing movements, are all unworthy of the presence of the Lord. A defiled conscience hinders remembrance and worship. Prior self-examination is therefore necessary and sin should be judged, confessed and cleansed (1 Jn. 1. 9), otherwise the chastening of the Lord is invited. Such judgment (v. 29) is temporal not eternal. Verse 28 removes all excuse for absence. Another's failure does not alter the obligation "this do." If personally involved, one should follow the procedure given in Jas. 5. 16 ; Matt. 18. 15ff and the principle of Matt. 5. 23, 24. Note that our Lord prepared His disciples for the Supper by the feet-washing, an action of deep symbolic importance as the context shows, Jn. 13. 1-10.

SUPERSTITION. As pointed out already, many erroneous doctrines and practices have gathered round this originally simple ordinance. The most serious are :—

(1) **Transubstantiation.** This doctrine of the Roman Church, introduced A.D. 831, teaches that "at the instant of consecration the elements are changed into that body which was born of the virgin ; the outward appearance only remains as before." The commemorative aspect is thus changed into a celebration of the idolatrous Mass, during which, at the elevation of the Host, communicants adore Christ as being actually present. To quote further, "there is offered to God a sure, proper and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead." A most ornate ritual, so attractive to the flesh, accompanies the performance. Contrast Heb. 7. 27 ; 9. 14 ; 10. 10-14.

(2) **Consubstantiation** is a Lutheran doctrine dating from the Reformation in the 16th century. This movement, though it accomplished much, did not break completely free from established clerical order. Certain errors of doctrine and practice remain in the "Reformation Churches." Consubstantiation teaches that Christ is bodily present with the elements at the moment of partaking.

MISCONCEPTION. Certain Scriptures are often misapplied to the Lord's Supper. Jn. 6. 48-58 has no direct reference thereto, for the Supper had not then been instituted. It has to do with

appropriation of Christ by faith for eternal life (v. 54). 1 Cor. 5. 7, 8 does not point to the Lord's Supper, see R.V.m. Passover typifies the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ as the Lamb of God. The seven days' festival that immediately followed ("Unleavened Bread") typifies the whole round of the Christian life, which is to be "kept" free from spiritual leaven—"malice" (in motives), "wickedness" (in conduct). One name, either "Passover" or "Unleavened Bread," often covered both feasts. Lk. 22. 1; Mk. 14. 12, with Lev. 23. 5, 6. As to breaking bread where there is no established assembly: 1 Cor. ch. 11 gives the assembly order, but this does not rule out the exercise of the privilege by believers in circumstances of a temporary nature, e.g., those travelling aboard ship, etc. Our Lord instituted the ordinance for "disciples" before the Church was in actual existence. It is significant that the breaking of bread is predicated of "disciples," not of the assembly, in Acts 2. 42; 20. 7; cf. Lk. 24. 30, 35 in keeping with Matt. 18. 20.

SUMMARY. The Believer's Relation to the Lord's Supper. It is

- (1) an Act of Submission—One's *will* exercised—Response to *His authority*—Result, the Joy of *Obedience*.
- (2) an Act of Devotion—One's *heart* exercised—Response to *His love*—Result, the Joy of *Mutual Attachment*.
- (3) an Act of Appropriation—One's *faith* exercised—Response to *His grace*—Result, the Joy of *Satisfaction*.
- (4) an Act of Adoration—One's *spirit* exercised—Response to *His deity*—Result, the Joy of *Worship*.
- (5) an Act of Communion—One's *brotherly love* exercised—Response to *His kinship*—Result, the Joy of *Fellowship*.
- (6) an Act of Expectation—One's *hope* exercised—Response to *His promise*—Result, Joy of *Anticipation*.
- (7) an Act of Self-examination—One's *conscience* exercised—Response to *His holiness*—Result, the Joy of *Restoration*.

CHAPTER 6.

WORSHIP AND THE CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD

DEFINITION. The English word "worship" (worth-ship) is primarily an act of respect shown to a person of high degree or merit (worth). "To worship" is to pay homage to, or hold in high honour, and, in the highest sense, to approach God with supreme respect and veneration. The worship of God is nowhere actually defined in Scripture, but its significance may be gathered from the use of certain words employed and from examples.

Words used. (a) Gk. *proskuneo*, to prostrate oneself (lit. "kiss") towards, to pay homage (Matt. 8. 2 and freq.) indicates the outward act, with or without a corresponding inward feeling. (b) Gk. *sebomai*, to revere, to feel awe for (e.g. Acts 16. 14)

expresses the inward attitude (kindred words found Rom. 1. 25 ; Acts 17. 23). (c) Gk. *latreuo*, often translated "to serve," is a wider term covering official service rendered to a superior, or religious service offered to Deity or false deities (e.g. Phil. 3. 3 ; Heb. 10. 2 ; 13. 10).

Examples of worship. The following should be closely studied, (a) Magi, Matt. 2. 1-12 ; (b) Mary, Jn. 12. 1-3 ; 1 Chron. 29. 10-22 ; Deut. 26. 1-11.

The Psalms abound in expressions of worship, providing a vocabulary that may be very profitably used by the Christian ; cf. Psalms 95, 96, 107.

DIFFERENTIATION. We must carefully distinguish between "Worship"—God's people coming in to God with acceptable offerings—and "Ministry"—God coming out to His people with blessings to meet their needs. *Worship* is Godwards—*Ministry* is saintwards—*Testimony* is worldwards.

Distinguish also terms often used for the general idea of worship, (a) *Prayer* (in restricted sense) is asking blessing from God ; (b) *Thanksgiving* is acknowledging blessing received from God ; (c) *Praise* is appreciating God because of His works (acts) ; (d) *Worship* (in strict sense) is adoring God because of His worth (attributes). Ps. 103 illustrates (c), Ps. 104 illustrates (d).

EXPRESSION. Worship is the highest privilege and duty of a redeemed people—properly a continual exercise, the normal attitude of soul towards God rather than a series of isolated acts, Heb. 13. 15 ; cf. Ps. 34. 1-3. If not a worshipper during the week and when alone, it is not likely one will be so in company on Lord's Day ! Here is fruit of the new life in Christ and consequent relationship to God in which believers stand. Worship flows only from the hearts of those who have a knowledge of salvation through faith in Christ. The unregenerate cannot worship God. Man must be a receiver of the gift of God, the living water of the Spirit, before he can worship in spirit and truth, Jn. 4. 10-14, 23-24. Only believers are constituted a holy and royal priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, 1 Pet. 2. 4-10. O.T. saints worshipped God as Jehovah, the covenant God ; Christians worship God as Father. Of old, worshippers were taught to seek Jehovah ; in Christianity, the Father seeks worshippers, Jn. 4. 23. Worship of the Father takes place in the holy intimacy of the family circle. His children approach with reverent love, all having access to Him on equal footing from the youngest to the oldest. Such a privilege saints of old never knew, though individually many rose to a high level of spiritual experience in communion with God. In the "family circle," Christ (firstborn among many brethren) is Himself the Leader (Precentor) of His brethren's praises, Heb. 2. 10-13. "Babes" in Christ are not excluded from this exercise, Matt. 21. 16 with 11. 25, 26.

Worship must conform to the nature of God, Jn. 4. 20-24. He is Spirit, therefore worship must be spiritual ; cf. Acts 17. 24, 25.

Israel had the shadows (the typical), and worship was in the realm of the material. The Christian has the substance, the reality—Christ—and worship is in the realm of the spiritual, Heb. 8. 5 ; 10. 1 ; Col. 2. 16, 17. All formality therefore is excluded. As a spiritual act, worship requires the prompting of our spirits by the Holy Spirit, the sole power for worship, Phil. 3. 3, the "flesh" being incapable of it. The human spirit is the highest part of man's tripartite being (1 Thess. 5. 23), and by it the believer is able to apprehend divine things.

Collective worship is indicated in Heb. 10. 19-25 ; 1 Cor. 14. 15, 16, etc., and cannot be dissociated from the gathering of the assembly for the breaking of bread. The spirit and the understanding are then both in exercise, the whole assembly uniting in the joyful liberty of the Holy Spirit to offer praise and thanksgiving to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. All human arrangement hinders the free operation of the Spirit. In the exercise of priesthood privileges any brother potentially may take audible part, but he should remember that he voices the worship of the whole assembly, not his own individual matters. Worship is a most solemn exercise, therefore due reverence before, during and after the gathering should be shown by all.

Worship is hindered by guilt upon the conscience. All the while his sin remained unconfessed, David's praise was silent, Psa. 51. 15 with 32. 3-5. He could utter only cries of distress and of complaint.

In no Christian exercise have fleshly expedients intruded more than in the worship of God. In so-called "public worship" or "divine service," human formularies have displaced the divine order. Such religious services commonly use a liturgy hurried through, often heedlessly, by a mixed company of believers and unbelievers ; the sermon is the central feature. This is not true worship. Outward form only serves to cover inward failure. Fleshly aids, such as ornate buildings, imposing ceremonies, affecting music, and eloquent sermonizing on political or social problems of the day rather than expounding the Word of God, all betray a sad, carnal condition of soul. It is "strange fire" (Lev. 10. 1, 2) that soon or late will call down the judgment of God, a spurious worship that dishonours His name. Multitudes of nominal Christians, like the Samaritans, "know not what" they worship, Jn. 4. 22.

CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD

The subject of worship can be better understood if the history of priesthood is briefly traced, for worship is inseparably connected therewith. The first priest spoken of as such is Melchizedek, but the office was already in existence. Prior to the Christian priesthood we may distinguish (in O.T.) four orders :—

(1) **Patriarchal Priesthood**—Family order, e.g. Noah, Gen. 8. 20, 21 ; Abraham, 12. 7, 8 ; Isaac, 26. 25 ; 31. 54 ; Jacob. 35. 1-3, 7 ; Job, 1. 5 ; 42. 8.

(2) **Royal Priesthood**—Melchizedek order, Gen. 14. 18-20 is a unique type of Christ is now enthroned in heaven (Heb. 7) and as King-Priest upon the throne of David in the coming millennial age, Zech. 6. 12, 13. This offers a most fruitful study.

(3) **National Priesthood**—World order, Ex. 19. 5-7 was offered conditionally to Israel as a chosen nation, but they failed and so forfeited this special favour, Hos. 4. 6. God's purpose was not frustrated, only postponed till a future day, Isa. 61. 6 ; Ezek. 44. 15, 16. Meanwhile Christian priesthood fills the privileged position, 1 Pet. 2. 5-9.

(4) **Levitical Priesthood**—Aaronic order, Lev. 8 was limited to Aaron and his family. Even near-of-kin Levites were excluded, Num. 16. 8-10 ; cf. 2 Chron. 26. 16-21. In appointment Christ's priesthood is after the Melchizedek order but His service follows the Aaronic pattern. Epistle to Heb. brings out both contrasts and similarities. As associated with Christ in the priesthood, Christians find a rich storehouse of instruction in the detailed types recorded of the Aaronic family. This brings us to the

(5) **Spiritual Priesthood**—Christian order, 1 Pet. 2. 5-9 ; Rev. 1. 6—priests whose glorious destiny is disclosed, Rev. 5. 8-10 (worship based upon redemption) ; Rev. 4. 10, 11 (worship based upon creation). Rev. 20. 6 refers to preceding millennial age. The Christian priesthood consists of all true believers in this day of grace, 1 Pet. 2. 7 ; such are born anew, 1. 23 ; 2. 2, and are "living stones" in a spiritual house, 2. 5. There is now no distinction between the sexes or between youth and age (contrast Levitical order), but the audible expression of worship (involving leadership) in the assembly gathering is restricted to brethren, 1 Cor. 14. 34. The N.T. knows nothing of a sacerdotal caste (clergy) distinct from the laity. Recognition of such, with wearing of characteristic dress and claim to special position and privilege, violates the Christian order altogether. The basis of worship is redemption. Israel could not worship in Egypt (Ex. 3. 18 ; 5. 1-3), but when brought out, the system of divine worship was established. In the typical order, qualified priests were (a) *Called*, Ex. 28. 1 ; Heb. 5. 1, 4 ; 1 Pet. 2. 9 ; (b) *Cleansed* (bathed), Lev. 8. 6 ; cf. Tit. 3. 5 ; (c) *Clothed*, Lev. 8. 13 ; Ex. 28. 40 (their garments evidenced their calling, even as the Christian's conduct does), 42 ; (d) *Consecrated*, i.e. set apart (sanctified) for service and worship by (i) application of blood, Lev. 8. 24 ; Heb. 9. 13, 14 ; (ii) sprinkling of oil with blood, Lev. 8. 30 ; 1 Pet. 1. 2. Every detail has its spiritual counterpart in the Christian priesthood, 1 Cor. 6. 11. Moreover, every priest must have "somewhat to offer" (Heb. 8. 3). The wave-offering, Lev. 8. 25-28, was God's appointed portion, the rest being given back by Him to His priests. "To consecrate" in Heb. is lit. "to fill the hands." As sinners we approach with empty hands, as worshippers not so, Deut. 16. 16.

PLACE. See Jn. 4. 20, 21. The heavenly (true) sanctuary not the local building in which we gather, Heb. 10. 19-25 with 8. 1, 2 ; 9. 11, 12. It is termed "within the veil" where Christ our High

Priest now is corporeally, Heb. 4. 14 ; 9. 24. God's presence chamber is entered in spirit not in body, by faith not by outward form. In Heb. 10. 19-22 note our (a) *Perfect Title*—the Shed Blood (" blood of Jesus ") ; (b) *Prepared Way*—the Rent Veil (not by Christ's perfect life on earth, but on account of His death, resurrection and ascension) ; (c) *Powerful Helper*—the Great Priest (Leader and Sustainer of a worshipping people).

DEPARTMENT. The Levitical priests ministered in bare feet, cf. Ex. 3. 5 ; points to the need of reverence in our approach to God, Heb. 12. 28, 29. Ablutions, abstinence from strong drink, and abstention from mourning and defilement by the dead are all strictly enjoined. All symbolizes that practical holiness which is essential in those who draw near to God, Ex. 30. 17-21 ; Lev. 10. 9 ; 21. 1. Physical as well as ceremonial perfection was required, Lev. 21. 16-24. Defects or " deformities " in the life of a believer are a barrier to acceptable worship.

FUNCTIONS.

(1) **Godward aspect**—as " Holy " Priests to present our offerings to God.

(a) *Privilege of Access.* Right of entry is granted to the whole Christian priesthood, and unrestricted as to times ; for prayer, Heb. 4. 16 ; for worship, Heb. 10. 22 ; cf. Eph. 2. 13, 18 ; 3. 12. Contrast Aaronic priests to whom the outer compartment of the Tabernacle (holy place) alone was accessible, the holiest being barred even to Aaron except once yearly, Lev. 16. 1, 2 ; Heb. 9. 6-8.

(b) *Presentation of Gifts.* Levitical—material sacrifices ; Christian—spiritual sacrifices. (i) *Praises*, Heb. 13. 15 ; contrast Hos. 14. 2 ; Psalms 50. 14, 23 ; 119. 108 ; not sacrificial animals, but sanctified lips. (ii) *Persons*, Rom. 12. 1, 2 ; yielding up the body, not in death but in life, though this involves death to self, cf. 2 Cor. 5. 14, 15. In Lev. 16 we see two goats " presented," one to die, the other to live, both at God's disposal. (iii) *Possessions*, Heb. 13. 16 ; Phil. 4. 18 ; 1 Cor. 16. 1, 2 ; 2 Cor. 9. 7, 12. This lifts the Christian giving out of the realm of a mere charitable collection. Proportionate giving is true priestly service.

(2) **Manward aspect**—as " Royal " Priests to dispense God's gifts to men.

(a) *Ministry of Prayer.* Intercession for the saints (following the example of our High Priest, Heb. 7. 24, 25 ; Rom. 8. 34), see Jas. 5. 16 ; Heb. 13. 18 ; 2 Thess. 3. 1 ; Psalm 141. 2. Intercession for all men, 1 Tim. 2. 1.

(b) *Ministry of Sympathy.* Example set by our High Priest, Heb. 4. 15, 16 ; 2. 18 (cf. Aaron, Heb. 5. 2)—Heb. 10. 24, " consider one another to provoke (i.e. stir up *oneself*) unto love and good works." Spiritual help is needed more often than material aid.

(c) *Ministry of Instruction*, 1 Pet. 2. 9 ; cf. Mal. 2. 7—(i) to "tell out" Christ, Gk. "to proclaim fully and openly"; (ii) to discern and decide various questions, Lev. 13 and 14 ; 10. 10, 11 (contrast Mal. 1. 7, 8 ; 13, 14 ; Deut. 17. 9).

(d) *Ministry of the Gospel*, Rom. 15. 16 (Gk. *hierourgeo*—"to minister as a priest," occurs here only). Paul's was a priestly service to the Gentiles.

PROVISION. As to God's gracious provision for His priests, it is instructive to study the typical import of (a) Prescribed portions, Lev. 8. 31, 32 ; and (b) Prohibited things, Lev. 10. 8-11—note the reasons given.

CHAPTER 7.

FELLOWSHIP—RECOGNITION AND RECEPTION

DEFINITION. The word signifies a mutual sharing, a common interest in anything, a partnership. The N.T. Gk. "*koinonia*" is variously translated "fellowship," "communion," "communication," and cognates by allied words.

BASIS. Christian fellowship is shown in Scripture to be based upon a common (shared-by-all) interest in the Person and Work of Christ ; not racial affinity or social status, not cultural aims or political creed, as with world "fellowships," "brotherhoods," and "unions." Christian fellowship is the privilege of all who are sanctified (set apart) in Christ Jesus, 1 Cor. 1. 2 ; sanctified by faith in Him, Acts 26. 18 and, so, called into the fellowship of God's Son, 1 Cor. 1. 9. Sharing a common faith (Tit. 1. 4), they enjoy a salvation common to all (Jude 3). For a short period in the beginning they even held their possessions in the common interest (Acts 2. 44, 45 ; 4. 32). This was not Communism (as some allege), for it was an entirely free contribution by happy mutual arrangement, whereas Communism compulsorily takes from one to distribute to another, an appropriation by the State of the property, powers and even persons of the people. Community of interest drew the Christians together into one holy fellowship (1 Jn. 3. 14, 16, 17), united in worship, in well-doing and in witness.

NATURE. This fellowship established by God is eternal in character, though enjoyment of it depends upon the spiritual state of the individual believer. It is active not passive, an outworking of faith (Jas. 2. 20ff) in serving the Lord and His people, Philemon 4, 7. In some businesses there are "sleeping partners," who draw a share of profits but do no work therein. The Christian fellowship is not so. Neither is it simply "pew-sitting" or merely sharing the Lord's Supper. Moreover it negatives both "isolationism" (Heb. 10. 24, 25 ; Acts 2. 42), and a "butterfly" procedure of flitting from one company of Christians to another, Acts 4. 23 ; Col. 4. 12 ("one of you"). This fellowship is :—

1. A Fellowship with God, 1 Jn. 1. 1-7.

(a) *Privileged Communion*—(i) With the Father (v. 3), who shares His Beloved Son with us ; (ii) With the Son, who shares the Father with us, Jn. 1. 18 ; (iii) Of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13. 14), the unifying Power. We share possession of the indwelling Spirit, who enables us to commune with God and with one another.

(b) *Essential Condition* (vv. 5-7)—walking in the Light, cf. Eph. 5. 6-14 ; Rom. 13. 12 ; Jn. 3. 20. Fellowship is disrupted by sin but the way of its restoration is indicated, 1 Jn. 1. 9 to 2. 2.

(c) *Blessed Consequence*, 2 Pet. 1. 3, 4. Lit. “*become partakers of divine nature.*” It is not new birth here, but progressive likeness to Him, hence the exhortation (vv. 5ff). A child is not only born of its parents but grows in likeness to them, 1 Pet. 1. 3 with 15, 16 (lit. “*become ye holy, for I am holy*”).

2. A Fellowship with the Apostles, 1 Jn. 1. 3. They shared with us their personal knowledge of Christ and His work (vv. 1-4). The doctrine of Christ (2 Jn. 9-11) is that which embodies these facts, and is the apostolic doctrine referred to in Acts 2. 42, which formed the basis of the Christian fellowship (cf. Jn. chs. 17, 18, 20-21 ; 1 Pet. 1. 25).

3. A Fellowship with the Saints. The Philippian epistle brings this out most beautifully. It is the epistle of joyful fellowship.

(a) *A Fellowship of Salvation* (Phil. 1. 7)—“partakers of grace” covers the whole range of spiritual blessings (Tit. 1. 4 ; Rom. 11. 17).

(b) *A Fellowship of Service* (Phil. 1. 5)—examples Phil. 4. 3 ; Philemon 17 ; 2 Cor. 8. 23 ; Acts 13. 14 with 14. 26-28 ; Gal. 2. 9.

(c) *A Fellowship of Spirit* (Phil. 2. 1). Here it would seem better to read “spirit” with small “s” as denoting the Christian’s spirit ; see context, especially the exhortation of next verse. Harmony of spirit does not mean uniformity of disposition or of action (cf. the apostles themselves).

(d) *A Fellowship of Suffering* (Phil. 3. 10 ; 1. 29, 30). See also Heb. 10. 33 ; Rev. 1. 9. This suffering is (i) *with Christ*, 1 Pet. 4. 14 (not His vicarious sufferings as sin-bearer at the hand of God, which He endured alone, but malicious sufferings endured at the hands of men in persecution for righteousness’ sake) ; (ii) *with saints*, 2 Cor. 1. 5-7 (present solace) ; 1 Pet. 5. 9, 10 (future splendour).

(e) *A Fellowship of Substance* (Phil. 4. 14ff ; cp. Heb. 13. 16) in the necessities of (i) *Saints of God*, Rom. 12. 13 ; 15. 26, 27 ; 2 Cor. 8. 4 ; 9. 13 ; 1 Tim. 6. 18 ; (ii) *Servants of God*, Phil. 4. 14, 15 ; Gal. 6. 6.

THE LORD’S SUPPER has been called “the focal point” of the Christian fellowship, 1 Cor. 10. 16, 17. Neither it, nor its sister-ordinance baptism, creates the fellowship ; but they both express

it, esp. the former. Note reversed order ("cup . . . loaf"), which is the order of our experience ; (a) a common interest in that which was effected by the blood of Christ (His death), followed by (b) fellow-membership in the Body of Christ (His Church). This involves a responsibility of true separation from all contrary to Him (vv. 20-22). The Christian fellowship, then, negatives :—

(i) *Fellowship with demons* such as in idolatry, spiritism, error-cults, etc. 1 Cor. 10. 18-22 ; 2 Jn. 9-11.

(ii) *Fellowship with the world*, 1 Jn. 5. 19, R.V. "world"—Gk. "kosmos," the whole organized world-system, social, political and religious, 2 Cor. 6. 14 to 7. 1 ; Eph. 5. 10, 11 ; 1 Jn. 2. 15 ; Rom. 12. 2 ; Jas. 4. 4.

(iii) *Fellowship with sins*—of the flesh, 1 Pet. 2. 11 ; 1 Tim. 5. 22 ; Rom. 13. 14 ; of the harlot church and her daughters, Rev. 18. 4 with 14. 8 and 17. 3-6.

RECEPTION. "Receiving into fellowship" is a much-used and much-abused phrase. Its only possible Scriptural meaning is the acknowledgment of a fellowship already existing between the individual and God. God's reception of necessity precedes man's, Rom. 14. 3, and we should receive all whom God has received. A local assembly is not like a man-organized fellowship, into which a person may be introduced and elected by fellow-members. Reception of a believer is in the name of Christ, as one who belongs to Him (Rom. 15. 7), not in the name of the church or upon any other ground.

Two classes of Christians are recognized, the "*strong*" and the "*weak*," Rom. 15. 1 ; 14. 1ff. Strong ones must support the weak not stumble them, which is a serious matter in the sight of the Lord, 1 Thess. 5. 14 ; Rom. 14. 21 ; 1 Cor. 8. 11-13. The "*weak*" one is to be received, and that not to the "*criticizing of (his) thoughts*," Rom. 14. 1. The "*weak*," be it noted, are those who hold sincere scruples about matters of no real importance. These include the legalistically-minded, who impose unnecessary restrictions upon themselves and others. How often such consider themselves to be the "*strong ones*"! Physical weakness may arise from (a) tenderness in age ; (b) infirmity of constitution ; so is it in the spiritual sphere. The assembly should be a nursery for "*babes in Christ*," a nursing-home for the "*weak*," and a training-home for all. In God's family there are various states of spiritual growth, 1 Jn. 2. 12-14. There is room for all in happy fellowship, but no room for an intolerant spirit towards any member thereof. Weakness (infirmity) must not be confused with sins. The latter are to be dealt with (Lesson 10), the former borne with, Rom. 15. 1-3. There is often "*weakness*" in those who have "*grown up*" from childhood in the assembly, converted but not fully taught through failure maybe on the part of elders to see that balanced ministry is afforded, or because of heedlessness of such ministry when given. A similar state of things is frequently found among Christians brought up in denominations. They find it

difficult to throw off all at once wrong ideas and practices taught them in the past. When such are received, wise and gracious handling is needed, that they may be instructed in the way of God more perfectly, Acts 18. 25ff ; Rom. 14. 19 ; 1 Cor. 12. 21, 25, 26 ; 13. 1-8.

Believers are received as—

(1) **New Converts.** Converted persons were "added to the Lord," Acts 2. 41 ; 5. 14 ; 11. 24, then "added to the assembly," Acts 2. 47 (J. N. D. note). On being baptized they were immediately introduced to the fellowship of local believers, which included all the privileges and responsibilities connected therewith, Acts 2. 41, 42.

(2) **Christian New-comers.** Their reception may be by—

(a) *Letters of Commendation.* This is according to the Scriptural order, 2 Cor. 3. 1, 2 ; Acts 18. 27 ; Rom. 16. 1 ; Col. 4. 10 ; Philemon 12, 17. The principle was fully recognized by Paul though he personally did not need such a letter. To demand a letter of commendation in the case of a well-known servant of God is arbitrary and unwarranted, 3 Jn. 5-8 ; Acts 21. 17. With an unknown believer it gives confidence as an endorsement from those who are acquainted with him. The Lord Himself, unrecognized in the world, presented His credentials, Jn. 5. 30-37.

(b) *Personal Introduction*, i.e. by one in the assembly who can vouch for the *bona fides* of the new-comer, Acts 9. 27.

(c) *Satisfactory Evidence.* It is not possible in all circumstances for a letter of commendation to be produced. In such cases there is great danger of unwittingly doing harm to a dear child of God by refusing to receive him merely for the sake of upholding a rule locally made. It is then expedient for elders to make a few inquiries, which no right-minded Christian will resent if conducted in a gracious spirit. He will surely see the importance of maintaining godly order in the assembly. If inquiries are satisfactory it would seem well for the person's name to be brought forward in the assembly (i) to afford opportunity for possible objection, which must be upon valid (Scriptural) grounds, and (ii) that the person may become known to, and be accorded a welcome by, all in local fellowship. Elders do well to inquire of one coming from another assembly without a letter, if he or she be under discipline, for none in this position should be received, at least until full investigation has been made. A better way then is to seek a reconciliation with that assembly. Experience shows that few having ulterior motives will attempt to associate themselves with a Scripturally-conducted assembly. Exceptions should be dealt with as need arises, i.e. when moral or doctrinal evil manifests itself, Acts 8. 21. 1 Tim. 5. 24 shows that a man's reputation for good or evil often precedes his coming, in other cases it follows after, i.e. is shown up later. Elders are responsible to guard the assembly from erroneous teaching and moral evil, but must not go beyond this to impose restrictions upon a Christian's liberty to act as he

believes the Word of God allows in matters of expediency. Though elders are to take the lead they must remember it is not they who receive or put away, but the assembly as a whole. Diotrephes' arbitrary action was a virtual denial of the Lordship of Christ, 3 Jn. 9.

For assembly fellowship there should be evidence of salvation, soundness of doctrine (essential truth), and consistency in life. Baptism alone is no test. An unbaptized believer is as much a child of God and a member of the Body of Christ as a baptized one; a baptized unbeliever is neither. Baptism is no more essential to fellowship than to salvation, though necessary to obedience in common with other of our Lord's commands. Over-eagerness to partake of the Lord's Supper, with reluctance to do His will in regard to baptism, should not be encouraged. Except in special circumstances the Scriptural order is not to be upset, Acts 2. 41, 42. It should be obvious that one who himself declines to obey the Lord in the matter of baptism is hardly qualified to be an instructor of others, especially as to Christian duties.

DISRUPTION. Fellowship in the assembly is—

(a) *disrupted by sin.* The offence must be brought to light, judged and dealt with according to procedure indicated in God's Word (see Lesson 10—Discipline).

(b) *disturbed by friction.* There are many causes for this and they are often petty and mean. He that sows discord is called a "worthless person" and if that discord be sown among brethren, that disturber (brother or sister) is strongly disapproved by the Lord, Prov. 6. 14, 16, 19; contrast Phil. 4. 5 where "moderation" (gentleness, yieldingness, sweet reasonableness that does not stand upon "rights") is enjoined.

CHAPTER 8.

GOVERNMENT—OVERSEERSHIP

INTRODUCTION. In Christendom God-appointed order is mostly supplanted by human organization, especially in the sphere of rule and ministry. Traditions gathered from writings of Greek and Latin "Church Fathers" and decisions of noted Church Councils, rather than the N.T. Scriptures, are appealed to in justification or condemnation of church doctrine and practice. Gatherings of believers endeavouring to follow the simple pattern laid down in the Word of God are often charged with repudiating leadership altogether, because no official class is in evidence. Without duly-accredited leadership, however, an assembly would soon be in confusion, like a community without government, cf. Judg. 21. 25. Christ is sole Head of His Body the Church, and His sole Vicar on earth is the Holy Spirit. A visible "head" may appear to make for a smoothly-running organization, but God's order, not man's notions, must be our true guide. Recognition of Christ's Lordship involves humble submission to any rule He may establish. It is important to remember that brethren who bear responsibility are to administer, not to legislate.

The Lord has set up two forms of leadership in His Church, "overseers" (bishops) and "ministers" (deacons), the former guiding the local assembly, the latter serving it. We must carefully distinguish "governments" from other "gifts" (1 Cor. 12. 28), i.e. administration from ministry, though they are intimately connected. Notice the order of address at Phil. 1. 1, "saints" followed by "bishops" (overseers—plural) and "deacons" (ministering brethren).

OVERSEERS—DESIGNATION. The terms "overseers" (bishops) and "elders" (presbyters) refer to the same persons under aspects of their activities and their age (spiritual maturity), respectively; Acts 20. 17 with 28; cf. Tit. 1. 5 with 7. Not all aged men are "elders," Tit. 2. 2, 3 (different Gk.); Job. 32. 9. Eldership goes back to O.T. times and was continued among Jews in their synagogues, Ex. 3. 16; 12. 21; 17. 5; 24. 1, etc. In early days churches followed the simple pattern of the synagogues led by "elders." Ritualists, however, have sought to model their services after the more complex pattern of the temple worship. Elders are first mentioned in connection with the Christian church at Jerusalem (Acts 11. 30) and as collaborators with the apostles (Acts ch. 15).

COMMISSION. It is the Holy Spirit who "makes" (sets) overseers in the local assembly, Acts 20. 28. He is the Agent on earth of Christ the Head in heaven. The Word of God knows nothing of the appointment of elders by ecclesiastical authorities, or of election by congregations or by existing elders. Newly-planted assemblies functioned at first without elders. Missionaries, who under God had been instrumental in planting these assemblies, on a subsequent visit chose for them certain men, having spiritual and moral qualifications which indicated to their experienced eyes fitness for eldership, Acts 14. 23. In a similar way Paul instructed Titus to appoint elders in the assemblies in Crete (Tit. 1. 5) but this gives no support to the idea of "apostolic succession," for the appointment conveyed no qualification to preach or to teach. Such ministry is after another order. We conclude then that the procedure was *inaugural*, and not intended to be continued once these assemblies were provided for. The writer believes we have here divine guidance for evangelists and missionaries in new spheres. Although the N.T. appears to give no specific directions for subsequent procedure, the expediency principle enunciated by Paul in 1 *Corinthians* would surely suggest that existing elders as spiritual guides should be on the look out for brethren having the requisite qualifications, and indicate them to the assembly. Such would then join the others in their prayers and counsels.

The appointment of a "bishop" with a "see" was an early departure from N.T. simplicity. The present system of ordination and nomination to office with the granting of "livings" by the government, by some college or corporation, even by unbelieving landowners, is certainly not of God but of the world.

FUNCTION. Eldership is strictly a local charge. It does not carry authority to "rule" in another assembly. Elders are not a board of officials set *over* an assembly but labourers *among* the saints, Acts 20. 28; 1 Pet. 5. 1, 2; cf. Lk. 22. 24-26; Matt. 20. 25-28. The word "governments," be it noted, follows (not precedes) "helps" in the order of local grace-gifts (1 Cor. 12. 28) and is omitted altogether in reference to the church universal, Eph. 4. 11. Whilst in general it may be desirable that those who attend to the business affairs of the assembly should be elders, this work partakes of a "deaconing" character, for which see next lesson.

In Scripture the work of elders is described as:—

(1) **Shepherding** (Gk. *poimainoo*). Christ Himself is Chief Shepherd of His flock (1 Pet. 5. 4; Jn. 10, 16) and elders are under-shepherds (1 Pet. 5. 2, "tend"; Acts 20. 28, "feed," i.e. tend as a shepherd, same Gr.). Peter was an example (1 Pet. 5. 1 with Jn. 21. 16, 17). Paul, too, was a true shepherd as well as a pioneer missionary (see his Epistles). The only place where Christian leaders are *called* "shepherds" (pastors) is Eph. 4. 11; double grace-gift in the same persons ("pastors and teachers"). "Pastor" shows occupation with souls, "teacher" shows occupation with the Scriptures. The former's work lies chiefly in private visitation, the latter's in public instruction. The shepherd's duties, then, are to supervise (lit. to "bishop"), tend and feed the flock. Among the saints it is necessary to instruct the ignorant, visit the sick (Jas. 5. 14), comfort the dying, console the bereaved, admonish the disorderly, encourage the faint-hearted, support the weak and restore the fallen (Gal. 6. 1), being longsuffering toward all, 1 Thess. 5. 14. Acts 20. 34, 35 also indicates giving material help where needful, either from one's own pocket or from assembly funds by arrangement. A true shepherd always pays particular attention to the lambs. False shepherds are more concerned about shearing the sheep than about serving them. Hirelings are constrained not by love, but by pay and are not prepared to take any personal risks! (Jn. 10. 12, 13). They "pasture themselves," Jude 12; cf. Ezek. 34. 2-6. Many such, alas, are found in Christendom today! Teaching for hire came in with clerisy, under which system money settles the sphere of ministry and determines doctrines to be taught or suppressed, Rev. 2. 4; Jude 11; 2 Pet. 2. 15; Hab. 1. 15, 16. As another has put it, "Pastors (shepherds) in assemblies are invaluable; pastors of churches, unscriptural."

(2) **Watching** (Gk. *agrupneo*. Heb. 13. 17) in the interests of souls. This is frequently linked with prayer, as in Eph. 6. 18. Adversaries are powerful, practised and persistent, 1 Pet. 5. 8; Acts 20. 29-31; 2 Cor. 11. 13-15; Jn. 10. 12; Matt. 7. 15-20; cf. 1 Sam. 17. 34-36. Laggards and stragglers of the flock are in danger of being snapped up by the enemy; also the "sick" and feeble, Deut. 25. 18. Shepherds guard, as well as guide, the flock.

(3) **Leading** (Gk. *proistemi*, to stand before, i.e. especially as examples). 1 Thess. 5. 12; 1 Tim. 5. 17; to be done with diligence, Rom. 12. 8, cf. 1 Pet. 5. 3. In Eastern lands, a shepherd is not a driver but a leader of the sheep.

(4) **Governing** (Gk. *hegecomai*, to preside, to rule), Heb. 13. 7, 17, 24; not as "lords," 1 Pet. 5. 3; Mk. 10. 42-45; being patterns, not princes. A governor's authority is delegated, not despotic.

(5) **Steering** (Gk. *kubernestees*, primarily a helmsman, Acts 27. 11). 1 Cor. 12. 28. Elders pilot the assembly, steering it clear of "rocks" upon which it might "founder."

(6) **Labouring** (Gk. *kopiaoo*, to toil; indicates wearying work as Lk. 5. 5); 1 Thess. 5. 12; 1 Tim. 5. 17; Acts 20. 35 ("so" points to manual work as 34). It is not merely attending "brethren's meetings" for the discussion of assembly affairs, but working among the saints, Tit. 1. 9, cf. Jude 22-23, R.V., always serving in the spirit of humility, 1 Pet. 5. 5, R.V.

(7) **Stewarding** (Gk. *oikonomos*, discharging a stewardship, Tit. 1. 7, cf. Lk. 12. 41, 42; 1 Cor. 4. 1, 2). God has entrusted elders with a responsible charge in His household, and in due time they must render account, Heb. 13. 17.

From the above it will be seen that the duties of elders are primarily connected with the *spiritual* welfare of the saints, 1 Tim. 3. 5 (same Gk. at Lk. 10. 34) and only secondarily, if at all, with temporal things. They should act in fullest fellowship with the rest of the assembly. Mutual confidence is essential. If some feel there has been an unjust exercise of "rule" by the elders, appeal can be made to higher authority, viz. to the Chief Shepherd and Head of the Church. Meetings of overseers should follow the Scriptural pattern, Acts 15. 6; 21. 18 and 20. The very plurality of elders suggests the need to come together for prayer and consideration of assembly matters. Unity of judgment must be aimed at, for a divided oversight usually means a divided assembly. Experience and expediency both indicate the undesirability of discussing everything before the whole assembly or even before younger brethren, when, for example, private and confidential questions arise concerning the moral character of someone in fellowship and affecting possible discipline. Considerable harm to innocent parties may result by giving to the affair wider publicity than necessary especially when allegations are found untrue. Elders are surely the proper ones to investigate the case and then advise the assembly. They are to take heed to themselves first of all, then to all the flock, Acts 20. 28.

QUALIFICATION. 1 Tim. 3. 1-7; Tit. 1. 5-9. Natural ability or business acumen, financial prosperity or social position neither qualify nor disqualify one for overseership. Overseers must possess moral qualities as well as spiritual capacity for the work. They should be "men of the Word," men of faith and men of prayer; in short, sound in doctrine and consistent in life, Heb. 13. 7; 2 Tim. 2. 2. In ritualistic churches the personal character of an office-holder is of little account. He may be dissolute in private life yet in virtue of his office he is permitted to "administer the sacraments," even to "pronounce absolution." In true Christianity the very opposite rules. No less than 18 different words are

used to indicate the character required of God in a true overseer. Two phrases also describe his capabilities and three his circumstances.

(1) **Circumstances** (a) Not a novice (recent convert), 1 Tim. 3. 6 ; note reason cf. 5. 22 ; (b) Husband of one wife, 1 Tim. 3. 2 ; Tit. 1. 6, i.e. in a land where plurality of wives is a legal custom such a convert may be received into fellowship but is debarred from overseership ; (c) Good testimony in the world, 1 Tim. 3. 7, e.g. not discredited in business ; note reason.

(2) **Capabilities.** (a) In effective control of his own household, 1 Tim. 3. 4 ; Tit. 1. 6 ; note reason ; (b) Apt-to-teach (Gk. one word), 1 Tim. 3. 2 ; i.e. not necessarily a " platform man " but able to impart instruction at least privately to younger believers.

(3) **Character.** Note the high standard to be applied and followed. Besides the general principles already mentioned, the elder is to be irreproachable in conduct, sane and impartial in judgment, self-controlled in speech and action, reasonable in attitude (not stubborn or self-willed), free from avarice, hospitable, etc.

RECOGNITION. Overseers are recognized by the saints because they have the affections and qualifications of elders and do the work of such. Note seven exhortations :—

(1) "**Know them,**" 1 Thess. 5. 12 ; i.e. by observation, for the Gk. word is never used of a *formal* recognition. Knowledge leading perhaps to a more open acknowledgment is signified by another word found at 1 Cor. 16. 18 with 16. Elders will obtain true recognition if they serve the saints well. Sheep will instinctively follow without appeal or coercion one they have come to know and have learned to trust.

(2) "**Esteem them,**" 1 Thess. 5. 13. Saints are to value them highly and appreciate them in love on account of their work rather than from personal liking.

(3) "**Honour them,**" 1 Tim. 5. 17 ; " double " honour indicates material support when necessary in addition to paying respect, 18 ; cf. 1 Cor. 9. 7b. Paul's example is not to be overlooked, however, Acts 20. 34, 35.

(4) "**Trust them,**" 1 Tim. 5. 19 with 1. No accusation is to be accepted against an elder except in the presence of witnesses and upon sufficient testimony, for elders are particularly exposed to misrepresentation by very reason of their work, e.g. in advising the assembly in matters of discipline. If there be ground for remonstrance, deference as to a father is to be shown, yet if sin be proved there must be public conviction, 20. Fellow-elders are not to cloak failure in one of their number.

(5) "**Obey them,**" Heb. 13. 17, i.e. in expressed injunctions, " and be submissive," i.e. to their known but unexpressed wishes ; cf. 1 Pet. 5. 5 ; 1 Cor. 16. 15, 16. Loyalty to leaders is enjoined because of their grave responsibility before the Lord.

(6) "Remember them," Heb. 13. 7. Here probably refers to leaders who had suffered martyrdom. Saints are to (a) consider the issue of their life (conduct), i.e. its triumphant finish; and (b) imitate their faith, i.e. faithful example. Leaders may pass away but Christ ever remains the one great Object of faith and service (v. 8). Undershepherds fall asleep but the Great Shepherd remains to raise up others, Himself exercising chief supervision, 20; cf. 1 Pet. 2. 25.

(7) "Salute them," Heb. 13. 24; i.e. greet them with kindly wishes so as to encourage. They meet plenty of criticism! If you do not always agree with their decisions do not bear resentment. Pray for them, Heb. 13. 18; 1 Thess. 5. 25; 2 Thess. 3. 1.

COMPENSATION. Note the wonderful promise (1 Pet. 5. 4) to be fulfilled in the day of accounting, Heb. 13. 17 (cf. 1 Thess. 2. 19; 2 Jn. 8, A.V.). What a reward for the arduous and often thankless task of an overseer!

CHAPTER 9.

MINISTRY—"DEACONSHIP"

(1 Tim. 3; 1 Pet. 4. 10, 11; 1 Cor. 1, 6)

DEFINITION. As used in the Word of God, "ministry" denotes any form of service rendered to the Lord or to others. Examination of passages where the Greek word ("diakonia" and its cognates) occurs, immediately confirms this. "Deacon" is a transliteration not a translation, and simply means "servant." The service performed may be a regular occupation or only a temporary commission. Derivation points to an earlier Greek word signifying "to hasten after," "to run an errand," etc. "Diakonos" expresses the servant's relation to his work; "doulos" (bond-servant) expresses the servant's relation to his master. In the N.T. the former refers to a domestic servant (Jn. 2. 5-9) and to a civil ruler, as servant of the State (Rom. 13. 4, 6). It is used of Christ Himself as Servant of Jehovah (Rom. 15. 8); and of Paul, Apollos and Timothy as servants of the Lord (2 Cor. 3. 6; 6. 4; 1 Cor. 3. 5; 1 Thess. 3. 2, R.V.). There were younger men who served the Apostle Paul and other leaders (Acts 19. 22; Col. 4. 7; Philemon 13, etc.). There were servants of the churches (Acts 6. 2; 10. 19 with 12. 25—including a woman, Rom. 16. 1). Even Satan has his ministers (lit. "deacons") 2 Cor. 11. 14, 15. A related verb is used of angels (Mk. 1. 13); of women (Mk. 1. 31; 15. 41 with Lk. 8. 3; 10. 40); and of Christ (Mk. 10. 45; Lk. 22. 27). The commonly-held view of a Christian "minister" is of one who holds clerical office in a church, usually at a stated salary, following theological training and subsequent "ordination" at the hands of superior clerics or "elders." This is a grave misconception. The idea of one "minister" or "pastor" over a local church is wholly foreign to the Scriptures. In 1 Tim. 3. 10-13 both the A.V. and R.V. show glaring examples of a mistranslation in the interests

of ecclesiastical practice. "Office of a deacon" represents a form of the one Greek word meaning "to serve." Cf. verse 1 where "office of bishop" represents simply "overseership." Phil. 1. 1 shows that the "deacons" were a well-recognized group in the assembly. The expression "ministering brethren" gives the true idea.

COMMISSION. The current ecclesiastical practice of "ordination" to service is a clear usurpation of the prerogative of God Himself, the authority of the Church's risen Head and the functions of the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 12. 28 ; Eph. 4. 11 ; 1 Cor. 12. 7-11. Note that the seven stars, Rev. 1. 20, are seen in the hand of the Lord. As to apostolic practice, Paul gives directions to Titus (1. 5) regarding the choice of elders, but nowhere do we find directions for the appointment of ministers.

Servants are appointed directly by their own Master, 1 Pet. 4. 11. It is obvious that natural gifts cannot be bestowed by ordination of men, much less so spiritual gifts. Lack of education, however, is no commendation. Natural ability may be turned into spiritual channels but this is not to be confounded with education *for* the ministry. Peter and John were not illiterate men but they had not been trained in the recognized theological schools, Acts 4. 13. Saul of Tarsus had exceptional ability, theological training and high attainments (Acts 22. 3 ; Phil. 3. 4-6), but under the mistaken idea that he was serving God he was working, in fact, in violent opposition to Him, Acts 23. 1 ; 26. 9 ; 1 Tim. 1. 13. How like many misguided persons in Christendom today !

The source of all spiritual gift is the risen Christ, who endows. The power for its exercise in ministry is the Holy Spirit, who endues, 1 Cor. 12. 4-11 ; 1 Pet. 4. 11 ; Eph. 4. 30 ; 5. 18 ; Lk. 24. 49 ; Acts 1. 8. All fleshly activity in the things of God is wholly unacceptable to Him.

FUNCTION. Among God's people two forms of ministry (i.e. service) appear ; (1) Service according to grace-gifts bestowed by Christ as Head of His Church, and (2) Service of a temporal and special nature. These are differentiated in Acts 6. 2-4—in spiritual things (ministry of the Word) ; in temporal things (ministry of "tables").

(1) *Service according to the grace-gifts ("charisma") of the risen Christ.* Four main passages should be studied—Eph. 4. 7-16, for the universal church aspect ; 1 Cor. 12. 4-31, for the local church aspect ; Rom. 12. 3-13 and 1 Pet. 4. 7-11, for the personal aspect. In *Ephesians*, our Lord is seen as an illustrious Conqueror returning from a successful campaign against His foes and proclaiming His great victory at Calvary by the distribution of bounty. His "gifts" are men for the welfare and enriching of His Church. Four major grace-gifts are mentioned. Two were passing (as belonging to the foundation period of Church-building (Matt. 16. 18 ; Eph. 2) and two permanent. *Apostles and prophets* both possessed unique authority and miraculous gifts as those through whom the Lord

revealed N.T. truth, the former by personal teaching (Jn. 14. 26 ; 16. 13, 14 ; Gal. 1. 11, 12), the latter by inspirational means (1 Cor. 14. 30). The apostles had seen the Lord (1 Cor. 9. 1 ; Acts 1. 21, 22) and were specially chosen to be witnesses to His resurrection (Acts 3. 15 ; 5. 32 ; 10. 41) ; prophets communicated the mind of God by a direct word from heaven. With the completion of the N.T. Scriptures fully revealing the will of the Lord for His people, the need for this great gift passed. The permanent gifts are *evangelists*, whose proper sphere is the outside world, and *pastors and teachers* (double gift in one person), whose sphere is in the assembly. The evangelist concentrates on preaching the gospel, planting new assemblies or bringing converts into existing ones ; he is concerned with the church's expansion. The pastor (lit. shepherd) and teacher concentrates on caring for the saints ; "shepherding" pointing to his occupation with souls, "teaching" to his occupation with the Scriptures. As shepherd his work is mostly in private, as teacher his work is in public ; he is concerned with the church's consolidation. The teacher has largely replaced the prophet (2 Pet. 2. 1) as one who communicates the mind of God (but now from the Scriptures instead of by revelation) and speaks to edify, vivify and mollify. Edification builds up, exhortation stirs up, comfort binds up, 1 Cor. 14. 3. Note that his ministry is constructive, not destructive, a point sometimes forgotten by platform speakers.

1 Cor. 12 enumerates grace-gifts in a local assembly, and it is significant that "evangelist" is omitted, for his work lies outside the immediate circle, though in full fellowship with it (v. 28). Here, too, passing and permanent gifts must be distinguished. Prophecies, tongues and even "knowledge" (cf. "word of knowledge," v. 8 ; i.e. of divine truth apart from written revelation), were of this temporary character, 13.8-10. Note that in *Ephesians* a later epistle, the "sign" gifts are entirely omitted. A most important truth emphasized in 1 Cor. 12, is that every individual believer shares the Christian ministry as a member of the Body of Christ. Not one member of our physical bodies is useless or merely decorative, and no believer is without some gift to be exercised for the welfare of the whole assembly, 12-27 with 4 (R.V.) ; 1 Thess. 5. 11 ; Rom. 15. 14. Women have their proper sphere in ministry, see Lesson 13. Some individuals may possess more than one grace-gift. It should be remembered that even the major grace-gifts are not in sole possession of those who are in what is termed "full-time service." Brethren who follow a secular calling are often well equipped for ministry of the Word. The call to "full-time" ministry comes with distinct guidance from the Lord and must not be taken up lightly, 1 Cor. 7. 20 ; Mk. 13. 34.

All divinely-appointed ministry is primarily for the glory of God through Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. 4. 10, 11. The main purpose of the greater gifts is to prepare and to fit all members of the body of Christ for the exercise of their proper individual function with a view to the balanced and harmonious development of the whole unto full growth and maturity, Eph. 4. 11-16, R.V. Ministry also

is a stewardship, 1 Pet. 4. 10 ; cf. 1 Cor. 4. 1, 2 ; 9. 7, which looks to the day of accounting at the Bema of Christ. Diligence, love, patience and prayerfulness are some of the many qualities enjoined among exhortations which all servants of Christ need to lay to heart, Rom. 12. 3ff ; 1 Pet. 4. 7-11. " Gift " is not to be neglected or laid up, 1 Tim. 4. 14, and needs at times to be stirred up (re-kindled as a fire), 2 Tim. 1. 6. The true servant seeks not popularity but to please God, Gal. 1. 10 ; 1 Cor. 7. 23 ; Matt. 6. 1ff ; the approval of the Lord is better than the applause of men.

(2) *Service of a temporal and special nature.* An assembly may choose anyone to perform a service that he or she may be willing and competent to undertake. See e.g. Acts 6. 1-6, where almoners were chosen in connection with the distribution of daily rations to needy widows. They were already well-approved servants of God, so they are not termed " deacons " although their service is called (lit) " deaconing " (" ministration," v. 1, diakonia ; " service," v. 3, diakoneo). Some of the seven, if not all, were able to minister in a higher capacity. Philip is known to have been an evangelist, Acts 21. 8. Compare his activities, 8. 5-8, 26-40. Note what is said of Stephen, 6. 6, 8, 10. Another example of " deaconing " is found at 2 Cor. 8. 18-24, and Phoebe, a sister in the Lord, is called a servant (lit. deaconess) of the church at Cenchreæ, Rom. 16. 1. It is evidently a divinely-established rule that if an assembly contributes funds, etc., it should have a voice in the selection of those who administer or distribute them.

QUALIFICATION. The divine requirements are set forth in 1 Tim. 3. 8-13. There are seven ; four positive, three negative. Note the high standard set, as with the " overseers " ; cf. Acts 6. 3 where only temporalities are in view. Note also the four important essentials in the case of women who serve, v. 11. There must be consistency between preaching and practice. Service and spirituality should go hand-in-hand, 2 Cor. 6. 3-10 ; 1 Thess. 2. 1-12.

REGULATION. For notes on the regulation of ministry in the principal gatherings of the assembly, see Lesson 5. Others have pointed out that a brother may have gift suited to a small local company consisting mostly of immature believers, but not gift that would profit, e.g., a united ministry-meeting consisting of Christians drawn from a wide area and of all stages of spiritual growth. Much distress is often caused by some who have no proper gift for public ministry yet persist in taking the platform and wearying the saints with profitless talking. It wastes both time and money expended in the arrangement of such gatherings. In flagrant cases of offence the principle of Tit. 1. 10, 11 should be applied.

RECOGNITION. Those who claim the call of God to ministry are to be proved (tested) as to soundness in the faith, consistency in life and capability in service and, if approved, " being found blameless " (i.e. no ground for complaint), they are to be permitted the liberty of serving among the saints according to their proper grace-gift, 1 Tim. 3. 10 ; Matt. 7. 15-20. The assembly is respons-

ible thus to recognize and to provide room for those whom God has set in the midst, 1 Cor. 16. 15-18. It is important to remember that the assembly cannot appoint or control any grace-gift, and certainly should not hire or retain solely for its own benefit any servant of Christ. Even an apostle had no authority to direct a fellow-servant of the Lord, 1 Cor. 16. 12. Moreover the servant of Christ is not to be judged as to service, sphere and motive, for he serves in view of the Bema of Christ, Rom. 14. 4, 10; 1 Cor. 3. 5-15; 4. 1-5. Elders, as responsible leaders in an assembly, should ever be on the watch for signs of gift in younger men and encourage such, affording opportunity for exercise and development towards maturity, 2 Tim. 2. 2. In these days there appears to be need to stress the importance of Paul's injunction, which will ensure a true "apostolic succession" in the church of God, 2 Tim. 2. 2.

The Master supplies the needs of His servants, Lk. 22. 35. His promises are all-sufficient to assure the one who has been charged with ministry. Nevertheless, where necessary, and particularly with regard to the greater grace-gifts, practical recognition by rendering financial support is enjoined upon the saints, 1 Cor. 9. 7, 13, 14 (evangelists); Gal. 6. 6 (teachers); 1 Tim. 5. 17-18 (elders who labour in the Word), "honour" here meaning "honorarium"; 3 Jn. 5-8. Paul's example in special circumstances and for certain reasons should not be overlooked by servants of the Lord, Acts 20. 33-35; 1 Cor. 9. 18.

COMPENSATION. For faithful service, recompense is promised, 1 Tim. 3. 13 (much better than the Masonic 33rd degree!), cf. R.V.; also Matt. 25. 31, 24, 45ff. It will not be according to the measure of success but of faithfulness, 1 Cor. 3. 8 Rev. 22. 12.

CONCLUSION. It is sometimes asked, How can I recognize gift in myself?" The following questions have been put forward in one way or another:—

- (a) Is there *due ardour* for a particular line of service?—
FERVOUR.
- (b) Is there *definite ability* for a particular line of service?—
FACULTY.
- (c) Is there *divine approval* upon a particular line of service?—
FRUIT.

Has the blessing of God been seen in service already rendered? Godly desire for the "greater gifts" is not discountenanced but encouraged, 1 Cor. 12. 31; 14. 1, 39. "Greater" means greater usefulness, not necessarily of greater prominence. None should seek a position that he has no ability to fill, but if he uses gift already possessed, the Lord may add further gift.

CHAPTER 10.

DISCIPLINE

MEANING OF DISCIPLINE. This word does not occur in our English Bible but the idea is there under the term "chas-

tening " (Gk. *paideia* and cognates). In a wider sense it signifies training by instruction or correction ; in a narrower sense correction only is in view. We should distinguish between discipline of an individual believer or assembly and discipline by an assembly. The former is by direct action of the Lord and is His prerogative alone. The latter is His mediate action through the assembly and is its solemn duty. The one has to do with order in the " family " of God, the sphere of relationship ; the other with order in the " house " of God, the sphere of responsibility. The former is illustrated by 1 Cor. 11. 29-32, the latter by 1 Cor. 5. 1-13. Distinguish also between God's judgments inflicted in just anger upon the ungodly world and the chastening of His own children, which is a seal of sonship and proof of the Father's love, Heb. 12. 5-13 ; cf. Rev. 3. 19. Discipline by direct action of the Lord is commended as a most profitable study, but our lesson is concerned rather with *discipline by the assembly*. This is a matter which is almost completely ignored in the sects of Christendom, though definitely enjoined in God's Word. Discipline is the more necessary because of the lawless spirit of the age, which has forced itself into the churches owing to the worldliness and carnality of Christians, a spirit that characterized the days of Israel's judges, Judg. 21. 25.

Three *assembly* acts are to be noted ; (a) the reception of all true believers, see Lesson 7 ; (b) the rejection (i.e. excommunication) of all gross offenders ; (c) the restoration of duly repentant offenders. The assembly may not shelve any of these responsibilities and leave matters with the Lord, 1 Cor. 5. 12, 13. The church at Corinth was sharply reprov'd for lack of prompt action in a flagrant case of immorality in the midst. They had adopted an easy tolerance of the evil and were even " puffed up " by the possession of many spiritual " gifts." Neglect of discipline dishonours the Lord, hinders the Holy Spirit and mars assembly testimony. Mutual concern is to be exercised on the principle of 1 Cor. 12. 25, 26.

Discipline, then, in the sense of our lesson refers to methods adopted to deal with persons who upset godly order in the assembly.

OBJECTS OF DISCIPLINE.

(1) **Negative aspect**—not a trial of faith but of conduct ; i.e. it is not to decide whether a person is a believer or not, 2 Tim. 2. 19, nor to get rid of a troublesome brother, toward whom patience is to be shown in grace, and prayer to God made concerning him.

(2) **Positive aspect**—is (a) to *secure restoration* of the offender, 2 Cor. 2. 5-11 ; Gal. 6. 1 ; (b) to *maintain the integrity* of the assembly before God as a " temple " fit for His presence in the midst, and before men so as to remove all appearance of connivance with the evil ; (c) to *furnish a warning* to all the saints lest a careless walk lead to similar lapse ; (d) to *vindicate the name of the Lord* by the removal, as far as humanly possible, of the reproach brought upon it before the world. If not immediately dealt with, evil spreads like leaven, 1 Cor. 5. 6 ; Gal. 5. 9 ; cf. the law as to " leprous stones " in a house, Lev. 14. 40, 41 ; also Josh. 7 where *Achan's* sin is seen to involve in its consequences the whole congregation of Israel.

SPECIFIC CASES OF DISCIPLINE. Contrary to an idea commonly prevailing, excommunication is *not* the only form of discipline. God's Word shows this is to be resorted to only as a last expedient. Seven categories of offence, some more serious than others, seem to be indicated :—

(1) **The Personal Offender,** Matt. 18. 15-20 ; Lk. 17. 3, 4.

(a) *Nature of Offence*—purely an individual matter, such as evil-speaking or breach of trust.

(b) *Method of Procedure*—note 3 stages ; no question of excision ; “ shew fault ” ; Luke has “ rebuke ” (call to account, require explanation) ; “ hear,” Luke has “ repent,” which implies apology and amends ; note measure of forgiveness, Matt. 18. 21, 22, 35 ; Lk. 17. 4 ; Eph. 4. 32 ; Col. 3. 13. Second stage is still of a private character ; third stage if unsuccessful, results in the offender being treated by the offended one (“ unto thee ”—not the whole assembly) as an outsider. Until the matter is straightened out there can be no fellowship between the two. Matt. 5. 22-24 is from the offender's view-point, one who knows there is real cause for complaint against himself.

(2) **The Overtaken Brother.** Gal. 6. 1-3.

(a) *Nature of Offence*—a temporary lapse ; not pursuing an evil course but one “ pursued ” and overtaken by temptation ; tripped up at an unguarded moment.

(b) *Method of Procedure*—Gk. signifies to re-adjust, to reduce (as a dislocated joint), to mend (as broken nets, Mk, 1. 19) ; cf. 1 Tim. 5. 20, which though primarily of an elder conveys a general principle. The rule therefore is : private offence, private rebuke ; public offence, public rebuke.

(3) **The Meddlesome Idler.** 2 Thess. 3. 6-15 ; 1 Thess. 4. 11, 12.

(a) *Nature of Offence*—Walking disorderly, especially disobedience to the Word (14) ; Gk. lit. “ out of step,” indicating inco-ordination or insubordination. The form specified here is “ busy-bodies ” (lit. “ working around ”), that is, visiting the saints not for edification but for gossip, evil-speaking and “ hanging-on.”

(b) *Method of Procedure*—Warning by elders, 1 Thess. 5. 14 ; if this proves unavailing, “ withdrawal ” by saints, 2 Thess. 3. 6, 14, not putting away but curtailing of fellowship, 15.

(4) **The Unprofitable Talker.** Tit. 1. 9-14 ; 1 Cor. 14. 26, 29.

(a) *Nature of Offence*—Wasting time of the saints in profitless “ ministry,” 14.

(b) *Method of Procedure*—Warning and sharp reproof (13) in order to silence (10, 11). Elders are responsible to prevent such abuse of liberty (9). Neglect is seen to lead to factions, Tit. 3. 9-11 ; “ heretical ” here does not refer to denying the faith but to one who in self-will seeks to gather adherents to his opinions,

especially in matters of interpretation or others not of fundamental importance. Such conduct is factious and may even end in open division, see next paragraph.

(5) **The Division Maker.** Rom. 16. 17-20, R.V. ; Tit. 3. 9-11 ; Acts 20. 30.

(a) *Nature of Offence*—Causing divisions and affording occasions of stumbling to others. This includes legalists and others who distort some element of truth, unduly swaying the saints to the fostering of a party spirit even to divisions. Differences in opinion or in judgment should *not* be allowed to lead to this.

(b) *Method of Procedure*—In the first place reproof may be effective, Gal. 2. 11-14 ; 1 Tim. 5. 20. If unavailing, "mark," "turn away from," "avoid" are terms used of proper action. If this rule be followed by all the saints, division cannot result. At Corinth, though saints were professedly one, there was imminent danger of division into rival sects, 1 Cor. 1. 10-15, not an evidence of spirituality but of carnality. The devil is the instigator of this evil and the flesh is ever ready to respond, Rom. 16. 20, 18. Note the double warning to, and double responsibility of, elders, Acts 20. 28-31.

(6) **The Gross Evil-doer.** 1 Cor. 5. 1-13 ; 6. 9, 10.

(a) *Nature of Offence*—A grave moral lapse such as listed, 11 ; "Fornicator" covers all cases of illicit sexual intercourse. "Covetous" covers all cases of evil desire for gain as shown in deeds ; e.g. all forms of gambling, sharp practice in business, etc., cf. Eph. 5. 5 ; 2 Pet. 2. 14 ; 1 Tim. 6. 9-11. The term "idolater" includes any active association with false systems of worship (even though bearing a Christian label), sorcery and spiritualism. "Reviler" covers vilification, defamation of character and false accusations—one who is given to this. "Drunkard" suggests one guilty of the habitual sin of intemperance, not one coming under category (2). "Extortioner" would include various forms of dishonesty, e.g. misappropriation of property or funds, fraud, profiteering especially in the food of the poor, Jas. 5. 1-6.

(b) *Method of Procedure*—"Put away (not simply denying fellowship at the Lord's Supper) from among yourselves," signifies formal rejection from the assembly fellowship to be followed by severance of all social relations, 11-13. Careful investigation of the circumstances may be called for, but in Corinth there was open sin with facts well known, hence no inquiry was needed. The offender is thus thrown back into the sphere of the world where Satan rules and becomes fully exposed to the enemy's attacks, 5 ; 1 Tim. 1. 20 ; 2 Tim. 2. 25, 26. That the discipline in this particular case was effectual, resulting in the offender's repentance and restoration, is seen by referring to 2 Cor. 2. 1-11 ; 7. 9-12.

(7) **The Unsound Teacher.** 2 Pet. 2. 1-3, R.V. ; 2 Jn. 9-11 ; 1 Tim. 4. 1 ; 2 Cor. 11. 13-15,

(a) *Nature of Offence*—Propagation of evil doctrine. This points to fundamental error, not to mere differences of interpretation in non-essentials, e.g. dispensational teaching, though the latter and indeed any over-stressed doctrine unwatched may grow into "heresy." Evil doctrine can be more destructive than loose morality, for common opinion is swift to denounce the latter among Christians yet gives little heed to the former.

(b) *Method of Procedure*—is the same as with moral evil. It is "leaven" which must be purged out, Gal. 5. 9 with 1 Cor. 5. 6, 7. Note that the Apostle's action is similar in both cases—1 Cor. 5. 5 with 2 Tim. 2. 18 and 1 Tim. 1. 20. No social intercourse is permitted, 2 Jn. 9-11.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF DISCIPLINE.

(1) **Judicial fairness is always to be employed.** The Christian standard is higher, not lower, than that of world courts, 1 Cor. 6. 2, 3. Godly order suggests investigation by elders, who should reject unsupported testimony (Matt. 18. 16 ; 1 Tim. 5. 9). They should then furnish the assembly with a brief report of essentials only. The assembly (not simply elders) acts in "putting away" when necessary. See Lessons 7 and 8.

Partiality is to be rigidly excluded, 1 Tim. 5. 21 ; Jas. 3. 17 ; 2. 1-4. Natural relationship or friendship must not influence judgment, Acts 15. 36-39. Extremes are to be avoided, for undue severity divides the assembly and undue lenience increases the evil. Unbalanced action destroys the confidence of the saints and dishonours God, i.e. harshness in minor matters while neglecting divine principles, Matt. 15. 1-20 ; 23. 23, 24 ; Lk. 11. 42 ; Rom. 14. 1-3 ; 15. 7. Such lack of balance is to be noted in Israel, Judges chs. 17-20. There was unanimous and violent reaction against a case of immorality, yet laxity and indifference towards a case of gross idolatry which brought dishonour upon the name of the Lord.

(2) **Scripture order is to be strictly observed.** The "cutting off" of an assembly or assemblies is quite unknown in Scripture. Carnal Corinth was not so "cut off." In Rev. chs. 2, 3, though the Lord has much to reprove in several of the churches He does not even hint at the "cutting off" of any by the other churches ; it is solely the Lord's prerogative to remove the "lampstand" if He sees fit, 2. 5 ; 3. 16. Where grave moral or doctrinal evil is tolerated in an assembly, godly ones may have to consider withdrawal from it as from a "disorderly" person, but only after all protests have proved unavailing and other measures fail. Action must not be hasty and there should be much prayer exercise.

(3) **Assembly decisions are to be loyally supported.** Misplaced sympathy only encourages the offender in evil-doing and so hinders restoration. It puts the sympathizer into the class of the "unruly" as partaker of the evil (1 Tim. 5. 22 ; 2 Jn. 11) making him liable to discipline also. No believer under discipline in one

assembly should readily be received by another. If, after due inquiry by elders, the first assembly is adjudged to have been over hasty or too severe, it would be well to approach that assembly with a view to reconciliation. To do otherwise would be subversive of godly order and might involve a breach of fellowship between the assemblies concerned.

(4) Offender's withdrawal is to be juridically ignored. Ceasing to attend the meetings on the part of an offender does not absolve the assembly from the duty of dealing with the case. It is essential, however, to differentiate between absence through coldness of heart, which is a matter for shepherd care, and absence to avoid discipline.

(5) Offender's restoration is to be sufficiently attested. Restoration to the Lord precedes restoration to assembly fellowship. True repentance should be manifested by departure from the evil and making restitution where necessary. Scripture does not advocate undue delay, 2 Cor. 2. 5-11. Wise discernment is here needed, coupled with true brotherly love, 1 Cor. 13. 4-8 ; Gal. 6. 2. The recovered one should refrain, for a time at least, from public service for God to prove his sincerity by a humble spirit and a consistent walk. There is no definite rule as to this (e.g. Peter's restoration, Jn. 21), though it must be remembered that our Lord knew Peter's heart, whereas our knowledge is limited. Lack of commendation for some special service or disapproval for it (Acts 15. 36ff), or disqualification for overseership (1 Tim. 3. 1-6) does not affect church fellowship.

CHAPTER 11.

CHURCH FINANCE

INTRODUCTION. The question of finance, which often presents such problems to the churches of Christendom, is really simple if the scriptural pattern be followed. Nowhere in the N.T. is there the slightest hint that the world is to be appealed to for funds to carry on the Lord's work. Those who do it are dishonouring Him. Giving to God is a privilege belonging to His people, whose offerings alone, spiritual and material, are acceptable to Him. As to others, God asks them to receive, not to give. It is particularly reprehensible to take up a collection at gospel-meetings, indoors or out. In sending out His preachers the Lord Jesus said, "Freely (gratuitously) ye received, freely give. Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass (copper) in your purses," Matt. 10. 8, 9, R.V. Paul was careful to adopt this divine policy, 2 Cor. 11. 7, labouring with his own hands rather than be chargeable to his hearers at Corinth and elsewhere, Acts 18. 3 ; cf. 3 John 7. God's salvation is "without money and without price," Isa. 55. 1 ; cf. Eph. 2. 8, 9. On the other hand it is inadvisable to announce "No collection," as this sounds like advertising generosity and may be deemed a reflection upon the pockets of those who wish to attend.

There will be abundant supply for all needs in the Lord's work if Christians recognize their privilege and rise to their responsibility according to the precepts of God's Word. Importunate solicitation, burdensome exactions, worldly expedients and elaborate financial organization, all will then be unnecessary. Such methods call down the just reproach of the world upon the Church as a money-making concern.

PROVISION OF FUNDS. It is a fundamental principle that all a believer has belongs to the Lord. He himself is not his own and all his possessions are held in trust as a steward of God, 1 Cor. 6. 19, 20 ; Rom. 12. 1 ; Lk. 16. 9-13 ; 2 Cor. 8. 5 ; see also Lesson 6, " Functions (1) (b)." Under the Mosaic economy God claimed back from Israel a certain portion of their possessions on the same principle, namely, that all they had was first given to them by Him. The first-born males of man and beast were His, though the offspring of man and ass could be redeemed by a lamb as a substitutionary sacrifice, Ex. 13. 1, 2, 11-15. The first-fruits from the land were His, Ex. 22. 29, 30. The tithe (tenth of all) belonged to Him, and this He gave back to the tribe of Levi in lieu of a common share in the division of the land of Canaan among the tribes. Tithing was observed by Abraham before the giving of the Law, Gen. 14. 20 ; Heb. 7. 4-10. Withholding any part of the tithe was robbing God, Mal. 3. 8-10. Then certain sacrifices and parts of sacrifices were the Lord's. All these were obligatory as a rendering up of that which was not Israel's. Giving to God in the true sense began after these obligations had been met and is regulated under the term " free-will offerings " which, as the name indicates, were wholly voluntary. First mention of a free-will offering is in connection with the materials and work for the tabernacle of Jehovah, Ex. 35 and 36. As to sacrifices, see Lev. 22. 17-25 ; 23. 38 ; Deut. 23. 21-23, etc. These passages all contain valuable instruction that may be applied to Christian giving. Further examples may be noted in connection with the building of the first temple (1 Chron. 29) and the second one (Bk. of Ezra).

Under grace, giving is wholly voluntary but the standard should hardly be less than that under the law, even as the privileges Christians enjoy are far superior to those of Israel. Five times in the N.T. giving is called a " grace " as being that which, in the Christian, is responsive to the revealed grace of God.

(1) Means of Giving. As we have seen, these lie with each individual believer, and instructions are found chiefly at 1 Cor. 16. 1-3 ; 2 Cor. 8 and 9, which passages should be carefully studied. Note " each one of you," well-to-do or otherwise, though the former have greater opportunity, 1 Tim. 6. 17-19. The churches of Macedonia gave out of their poverty, 2 Cor. 8. 2-4, the first principle of giving being stated (5). Women, too, manifested this grace, Lk. 8. 3, and the Lord accepted the ministry of their gifts. Brethren wholly engaged in the Lord's work are not exempted, for they are like the Levites of old, Num. 18. 25-32.

(2) **Measure of Giving.** This is to be according to a person's ability, 2 Cor. 8. 11, 12; Acts 11. 29; "as he may prosper," 1 Cor. 16. 2. Liberty rules, not law, 2 Cor. 9. 5, but inasmuch as God is a liberal giver (Jas. 1. 5; Jn. 3. 16; Rom. 8. 32, etc.); His children should be like Him. Our Lord impoverished Himself to make us rich, 2 Cor. 8. 9. Such superlative grace is an incentive to all; cf. Rom. 12. 8, margin; 2 Cor. 8. 2; 9. 11, 13. Note the Lord's estimate of measure, Mk. 12. 41-44; Lk. 21. 1-4; and the Lord's promise, Lk. 6. 38; cf. 2 Cor. 9. 6; Prov. 11. 24, 25; 22. 9; Mal. 3. 10.

(3) **Motive of Giving.** *Negative*—not for the admiration and applause of men, Matt. 6. 1-4, therefore our giving should be done unostentatiously and, as far as possible, privately. It is the world's way to publish lists of charitable gifts, placing the names of those who contribute the largest sums at the top, ctr. Lk. 21. 1-4. *Positive*—love to God and man, 1 Cor. 13. 3; 2 Cor. 8. 8; 1 Jn. 3. 17, 18; Gal. 6. 10; constrained by divine love not by human appeals, 2 Cor. 5. 14; seeking the glory of God, 1 Cor. 10. 31.

(4) **Manner of Giving.** Willingly, 2 Cor. 8. 3, 11, 12; and cheerfully, without grudging, 2 Cor. 9. 7; Acts 20. 35. Christians are to give honestly, by which is meant that they give only what is rightly theirs. Debts to tradesmen and others, for instance, and prior family obligations must be discharged first, Rom. 12. 8; Mk. 7, 11-13; 1 Tim. 5. 8; 2 Cor. 8. 20, 21. Also necessary is a clear conscience in relation to brethren for gifts to be acceptable to the Lord, Matt. 5. 23, 24.

(5) **Method of Giving.** The Word of God teaches us to give systematically not haphazardly, 1 Cor. 16. 1, 2. This is done by (a) *Laying up a store* proportionately to income, setting aside with purpose as before the Lord. Some have a special box at home for this. Well-to-do brethren often have a separate bank-account. Others simply make a book-keeping entry. It is from such a store that gifts are made to various objects as exercised by the Spirit of God, and thus the embarrassment of a sudden call is avoided, 2 Cor. 9. 5. (b) *Regularly putting by*, 1 Cor. 16. 2, linking it thus with worship and the remembrance feast of the Lord's Day. (This was also the day of the presentation of the first-fruits in Israel, (a) the wave sheaf, Lev. 23. 9-14, and (b) the wave loaves, Lev. 23. 15-21, typical of our Lord's resurrection (1 Cor. 15. 20, 23) and Pentecost (Acts 2), respectively.)

COLLECTION OF FUNDS. Collective gifts are indicated in Acts 11. 29, 30; Rom. 15. 25, 26; 1 Cor. 16. 1; Phil. 4. 15, 16; individual gifts, 2 Jn. 5-7; Gal. 6. 6; Heb. 13. 16; 1 Tim. 6. 18; Acts 4. 36, 37. Contributions for many local church expenses can scarcely be regarded as giving to the Lord. Rent, furnishing, light and heat, caretaking, etc., are necessary to secure the comfort and convenience of the saints themselves. Sharing such expenses is a matter of obligation, a debt rather than a "free-will offering."

ADMINISTRATION OF FUNDS should be in the hands of more than one brother, Acts 6. 3-6 ; 1 Cor. 16. 3, 4 ; 2 Cor. 8. 18-21 ; 9. 3-5. This wise arrangement leaves no room for unkind suspicions, increases the confidence of saints, and spreads the burden of responsibility. Though such brethren minister in temporalities, their moral and spiritual qualifications are to be high, Acts 6. 3 ; 1 Tim. 3. 8-13. Obviously they must also possess business capability. From these passages it would appear to be a principle with the Lord, that those who contribute funds should have a voice in the selection of persons to take charge thereof. Other than the possession of the necessary qualifications no indication is given of the method of choice, so that elders as leaders in the assembly would seem free to judge the most expedient way of discovering the mind of the saints. Accounts should be rendered at regular intervals, again on the principle of 1 Cor. 14. 40.

DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS. In the N.T. we see four main avenues for the disbursement of gifts.

(1) **Needy Widows**, Acts 6. 1-6 ; 1 Tim. 5. 4-16. Not all widows in the assembly are qualified for such aid. They must be (a) really destitute, having no family able to support ; (b) at least 60 years of age ; (c) women of prayer and trust in God ; (d) those bearing a character approved for godly living and activity.

(2) **Poor Saints**, Rom. 12. 13 ; 15. 23-27 ; Gal. 2. 9, 10 ; Acts 11. 29, 30 ; 24. 17 ; 2. 44, 45 ; 1 Cor. 16. 1-3 ; 2 Cor. 8 and 9 ; Prov. 19. 17. There is no lack of opportunity, Mk. 14. 7. This does not include the indolent and thriftless, 2 Thess. 3. 10. Compare the charge to Israel, Deut. 15. 7-11.

(3) **God's Servants**, Phil. 4. 15-19 ; (a) the Evangelist, 1 Cor. 9. 4-14 ; (b) the Teacher, Gal. 6. 6 ; (c) the Elder who labours in the Word, 1 Tim. 5. 17, 18—in cases where secular employment has been relinquished for the sake of serving the Lord. Apostolic example should not be forgotten, however, Acts 18. 3 with 20. 34. Questions of expediency may arise—(a) to make the gospel without charge (1 Cor. 9. 15-18), so removing all ground for suspicion of mercenary motives, 2 Cor. 11. 7-12 ; (b) to be an example in the matter of Christian giving, Acts 20. 33-35 ; (c) to avoid being burdensome to saints both poor and suffering persecution, 1 Thess. 2. 9 ; 2 Thess. 3. 7-9.

(4) **Philanthropic Efforts**, Gal. 6. 10 ; 1 Thess. 5. 15. The household of faith has prior claim upon the gifts of God's people but not an exclusive claim.

The Effects of Giving are seven :—

1. It is well-pleasing to the Lord, 1 Cor. 9. 7 ; cf. Heb. 13. 16 ; Phil. 4. 18.
2. It brings relief to necessitous saints, 2 Cor. 9. 12.
3. It stimulates others to like effort, 2 Cor. 8. 1, 2 ; 9. 2.
4. It promotes thanksgiving in grateful recipients, 2 Cor. 9. 11-14.

5. It evokes prayer for the kind-hearted givers, 2 Cor. 9. 14.
6. It increases capacity for further giving, 2 Cor. 9. 8-10 ; Prov. 11. 24 ; Lk. 19. 24-26. Note the divine principle here.
7. It produces fruit to the donor's account, Phil. 4. 17 ; 2 Cor. 9. 10.

The Rewards for Giving.

Giving after the divine pattern brings a present reward in the joyful knowledge of doing the will of the Lord, and in the pleasure of assisting others in need ; Prov. 11. 24, 25 ; Lk. 6. 38. Nevertheless, God is pleased to indicate further means of approval in a coming day, faithful stewardship ranking high in His gracious estimation, Matt. 6. 19-21 ; 25. 14-30 ; Lk. 16. 9-13 ; 19. 11-27 ; 2 Cor. 9. 6. Note the principle, Matt. 25. 40 ; 10. 42. A "well done" from the Lord is assured, and a "welcome (well come)" from many friends in the eternal tabernacles, Lk. 16. 9.

SUMMARY.

Christians, then, should give (1) Devotedly (Godward) ; (2) Lovingly (manward) ; (3) Willingly (with cheerfulness) ; (4) Liberally (abounding in this grace) ; (5) Methodically (purpose—preparation—proportion) ; (6) Unostentatiously (no self-display) ; (7) Honestly (only what is truly theirs).

EXTRA NOTE. It is hardly becoming in servants of the Lord to advertise personal needs, Paul and other apostles did not do so, though they did make known the needs of distressed saints. Information is often desirable but solicitation never. Servants of Christ look to their Master alone for due support. He it is who moves the hearts of His people in right directions to meet His servants' requirements. Gifts for personal service may be acknowledged by word or letter, but account of stewardship should be given for the disbursement of all entrusted funds.

CHAPTER 12.

THE CHURCH'S DEVELOPMENT AND DESTINY

1. DEVELOPMENT.

The development of the true Church is from two directions : (1) External ; (2) Internal. *External by the work of Evangelism.* This is growth towards completion (finality) and is described in the N.T. under the figure of a Building. It is accomplished by Christian witness, the duty of all believers, for which the risen Lord has bestowed the special permanent grace-gift of evangelists. *Internal by the work of Edification.* This is growth towards perfection (maturity) described in the N.T. under the figure of a Body. It is accomplished by Christian service, the functioning of all members, for which the Lord has bestowed the permanent grace-gift of pastors and teachers (double gift). The former shows progress by expansion ; the latter shows progress by consolidation.

SPECIAL NOTE. It is of the utmost importance to distinguish between the Church and Christendom. The former is composed only of truly born-again persons (Lesson 1), the latter is the mass of religious profession bearing the name of Christ. Differentiate also between the Kingdom and the Church. These terms in Scripture are not synonymous. Failure to observe this has led to many erroneous interpretations and grievous false doctrines. The Church is included in the Kingdom but is not co-extensive with it. The Church was inaugurated at Pentecost and will be completed at the Translation (Rapture). The Kingdom overlaps in time and has three phases. (1) *The Kingdom in Ministry* (past) began with the preaching of John the Baptist (Matt. 3. 2) and the presence of the King (Matt. 4. 17), and ended with the virtual rejection of the King by the Jews (Matt. 12), which they confirmed by later declaration (Jn. 19. 15). (2) *The Kingdom in Mystery* then began (Matt. 13. 11), its history being given by the Lord in parabolic form, carrying through the present age on to the return of the King in glory. It is this phase that so nearly corresponds with Christendom, the progress of which is instructively set forth at Matt. 13. 24-33. (3) *The Kingdom in Manifestation* (prospective) will begin when the King returns to inaugurate His personal reign. This is commonly known as the millennium, which means "thousand year period" (Rev. 20). The Kingdom was long foretold by prophets of old, the Church was a mystery which from all ages was hid in God until the appointed time of its revealing (Eph. 3. 3-11; Col. 1. 24-29).

PROGRESS BY EVANGELISM. The universality of Christ's Saviourhood is seen in scriptures such as Lk. 2. 29-32; 3. 6; Jn. 4. 42; Rom. 1. 5; 1 Tim. 2. 6, 7, in accord with which is the Lord's comprehensive commission, Matt. 28. 18-20; Mk. 16. 15. The divine plan involves all believers as witnesses, as the scope of Lk. 24. 46-48 and Acts 1. 8 indicates. A witness is one who tells what he has seen and heard, what he *knows*. The immediate band of early disciples were specially chosen to be witnesses to the facts of Christ's death and resurrection, Acts 1. 22; 2. 32; 3. 15; 4. 33; 5. 32; 10. 39-41; 13. 30, 31; facts to which Paul also could witness, 22. 14, 15; 26. 16-18; 22. 23. Believers are witnesses in a more general sense, luminaries in this dark world, holding forth the word of life, Phil. 2. 15, 16. Three essentials in church witness are indicated in this epistle at 1. 27, 28, namely, (a) *Consistency*—a worthy behaviour; (b) *Co-operation*—a united purpose; (c) *Courage*—a fearless attitude. Life and lip must be in accord. The Church at Thessalonica bore such a testimony, a witness to the world and an example to the saints, 1 Thess. 1. 6-10.

It is a great mistake to look upon evangelising as the sole responsibility of the evangelist. In the Acts record "evangelising" is predicated of believers (men and women) who were scattered abroad owing to the persecution at Jerusalem, Acts 8. 4 ("preaching," Gk. *euangelizo*). In Acts 11. 20 the same word occurs and is there associated with "speaking the word" in the previous

verse, indicating an informal telling out of the gospel. The chief words translated "preach," etc., are (a) *euangelizo*, meaning to announce glad tidings, and thus points to the nature of the message. (b) *Keerusso*, meaning to proclaim as a herald, whether the announcement be good news or bad ; it points to the manner of telling as authoritative. (c) *Katangelo*, meaning to proclaim, has an intensive force as bringing home truth to the persons concerned. Students interested should consult a concordance such as Young's, or Strong's or Wigram's for occurrences of these words.

The purpose of God must be borne in mind. This is not the conversion of the world, as so many imagine, but is stated in Acts 15. 14 as visiting "the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name." It is the out-calling of the Church, and the challenge of Rom. 10. 14, 15 is insistent here. It is noticeable that in Scripture no provision is made for elaborate organisation and the need for such is not contemplated ; cf. Acts 5. 42. As so often seen in our lessons, simplicity is the keynote in the divine order. Through the testimony of the early disciples, there was progress by "addition" (Acts 2. 41-47 ; 5. 14 ; 11. 24) and "multiplication" (Acts 6. 1-7 ; 9.31).

The *Evangelist* is not merely a preacher but one specially gifted by Christ to be a winner of souls. He concentrates on proclaiming the gospel, planting new churches or bringing converts into existing ones, 1 Cor. 3. 5-9. He does not plant "groups" or "circles." The evangelist must have (a) a zeal for the Lord ; (b) a passion for souls ; (c) an understanding of the gospel.

While identified with a local assembly (Acts 13. 3) he goes out into the world with the word of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5. 18-20), ready like Philip to preach to the crowds (Acts 8. 4-8, 40) or to an individual (26-39), to go to a city or into a desert (*ibid*). Philip is the only one actually termed an evangelist (Acts 21. 8), but Paul was certainly one as well as an apostle (Rom. 1. 15) and we should probably include Timothy (2 Tim. 4. 5).

The evangelist's true objective is to bring souls into a right relationship with God, producing Conviction—Confession—Conversion. His first aim is to glorify God ; his only true power is the Holy Spirit ; the sole medium through which the Spirit operates is the Word of God, 1 Pet. 1. 23-25. The apostles preached "the Word," cf. 2 Tim. 4. 2, "Jesus and the resurrection," "the kingdom of God," "Christ and Him crucified," presenting clearly the facts of our Lord's death and resurrection and the reasons therefor, aptly summed up by Paul, 1 Cor. 15. 3, 4. Much of the preaching today is not of this character. Within the limits imposed by scripture principles, ways of presenting the gospel may be adapted to changing times and conditions. We cannot close our eyes to the fact that in Christian homelands the weekly gospel meeting, as we know it, fails to meet the need today. Gospel halls as well as denominational churches are mostly shunned by unsaved people, yet we seem to be firmly wedded to our traditional order of things, forgetting that Scripture affords no such rigid pattern. Gospel

messengers of apostolic days followed the Lord's commission to "go" rather than expecting the people to "come" to them. In the Book of Acts we find them visiting private homes as well as public buildings, Jewish synagogues as well as Greek market-places, preaching by roadside and riverside, in schools and lodgings, in prison and in palace, wherever in fact they could obtain a hearing for the glad tidings. It is significant that our Lord used the illustration of "fishing" to describe the work of the evangelist, a subject with which many in His immediate band of disciples were not only familiar, but in which some of them were experts, Mk. 1. 16-20; Lk. 5. 1-11. Line fishing and net fishing both have their application to methods of evangelistic work. The successful fisherman has to study closely the habits of various kinds of fish, their times and seasons, suitable bait to use, etc., and above all he must go to the place where the fish are!

Much might be said, and needs to be said, concerning modern methods of evangelism, especially some mass "revivals" in which popular preachers tend to introduce many undesirable features and appeal to people's love of novelty and excitement. True servants of God should ever be on their guard against copying these worldly tactics so derogatory to the dignity of the gospel proclamation. "Decisions" are not necessarily conversions, yet this appears to be the chief aim in many mass campaigns. There is urgent need for drastic revision of such methods in favour of a return to the far more simple apostolic pattern.

MISSIONARY WORK. The word "missionary" does not occur in our English Bibles but the idea is there. He is one who has a mission from God, usually with the evangelist's gift, but not necessarily so, for his mission may be to teach or to do other work for the Lord. The word is really the Latin form of the Greek word "apostle," meaning one who is sent, and the corresponding verb is commonly used in the N.T. for sending on a mission of any sort, without reference at all to the special band known as "apostles." The term "missionary" is usually applied to one who goes to an unevangelised country with the gospel. Though the word is convenient to use it does tend to create an artificial distinction between the Lord's servants working in the homelands and those occupied in distant lands. The field is the world (Matt. 13. 38) and each labourer has his own proper gift and sphere in service for the Lord. Nevertheless it is essential that all God's people should cultivate a world view of Christian witness and not the insular or contracted local view that, alas, is all too common amongst us, Jn. 4. 35; Matt. 9. 37, 38. Questions concerning the individual missionary's call to service, his commendation, conduct, control and communication lie outside the scope of our present paper, but they are of very great importance.

PROGRESS BY EDIFICATION. Growth of the Church by the edification of itself in love is the subject of Eph. 4. 1-16; Col. 2. 19 (universal aspect); 1 Cor. 12. 14 (local aspect) to accomplish which there is a Spirit-set overseership (Lesson 8) and a God-

ordained ministry (Lesson 9). Eph. 4. 11-13 should be read in the English R.V. and it will be noted that the exercise of the major grace-gifts is in order to the perfecting of the saints unto the work of service, that is, that all believers as members of the Body of Christ should be equipped and encouraged to fulfil the function proper to each for the building up of that Body until full maturity of the whole is reached. For the analogy of a "body" in connection with the Church, see Lesson 1.

2. DESTINY.

In the divine plan the Church is to subserve God's purpose for the glory of Christ, Eph. 1. 9, 10, 22, 23. Her visible unity is not designed for the present age for she is not yet complete, though as a distinct entity she had pre-existence in the eternal counsels of God, Eph. 1. 4 ; 3. 1-13. Her visible association with the Head awaits the day of Christ's manifested glory. Unity, however, should be exhibited among believers even now (as far as is consistent with loyalty to God's Word), Eph. 4. 3 ; Jn. 17. 21-23. The Church conceived in eternity and created in time is now (a) the vehicle for the display of God's wisdom to higher intelligences, Eph. 3. 10 ; cf. 1 Cor. 11. 10 ; (b) the vehicle of testimony for God to men, as a light in the world's darkness, Rev. 1-3. She is ultimately to be (a) the vehicle for the display of God's grace, Eph. 1. 6 ; 2. 7 ; (b) the vehicle for the display of God's glory, Eph. 1. 12, 14 ; 3. 21 ; cf. 2 Thess. 1. 10.

As to the Church's eternal destiny comparatively little is revealed, no doubt because our poor finite minds would utterly fail to grasp the glories of it. The very cost to the Lord of her redemption assures us of the blessedness of her future portion. What the Word of God does make known is sufficient to sustain the hearts of the Lord's people amid the trials of the present scene and to encourage faithful witness and zealous service. The proper hope of the Church is to be with her Lord, and this will be consummated at His coming to the air (1 Thess. 4. 17) according to His promise (Jn. 14. 3) and to His prayer (Jn. 17. 24). She is to be His companion in millennial and eternal glory, Roms. 8. 17, 18, 21, R.V. ; Rev. 19. 7 ; 21. 9 ; 22. 5.

Order of Events connected with the Coming of the Lord, His "parousia" ("presence," R.V. margin), a word which denotes a *period* not an act as may be clearly seen from its use at Phil. 2. 12. During the period of Christ's "presence," commencing with His descent to the air and ending with the manifestation of His presence (2 Thess. 2. 8) by His advent in glory, many events occur both in heaven and on earth. So far as these have to do directly with the Church they may be shown thus :—

- (1) *Resurrection* of the sleeping saints, 1 Thess. 4. 16.
- (2) *Transformation* of the living saints, 1 Cor. 15. 52 ; Phil. 3. 20, 21.
- (3) *Translation* of the whole company, 1 Thess. 4. 17. In this the O.T. saints share, though they form no part of the Church.

(4) *Examination* before the Bema of Christ, 1 Cor. 4, 4, 5 ; Rom. 14. 10 ; 2 Cor. 5. 10 ; 1 Cor. 3. 13-15. Purpose—Review and reward—deciding future dignity not future destiny.

(5) *Presentation* to the glorified Christ, Eph. 5. 25-27 ; Jude 24. 25. Cf. the type in Eve, Gen. 2. 18-23. Note that (4) is an essential preparation for (5).

(6) *Celebration* of the Lamb's marriage, Rev. 19. 6-9 ; Eph. 5. 32, which mystery (secret) is now revealed. This is the exhibition in heaven of the relationship established between Christ and His Church. Heaven is the latter's true sphere. As the Body of Christ she is *nearest* to Him ; as His Bride she is *dearest* to Him. Here is seen to be a double preparation for her proper home (a) Divine grace has fitted her, Col. 1. 12 ; (b) personal conformity has exercised her, Rev. 19. 8, R.V. Divine righteousness is hers by gift, Rom. 3. 21, 22 ; 5. 17 ; personal "righteousnesses" are hers by deeds, Rev. 19. 8. The Bride prepares part of her own trousseau !

(7) *Manifestation* with Christ at His appearing, Col. 3. 4 ; Rom. 8. 19-23 ; 2 Thess. 1. 10. This is the public exhibition to the world of the relationship established between Christ and His Church. Having shared His reproach and rejection she is now to share His reign as Son of Man in the millennial kingdom, 2 Tim. 2. 12 ; Rom. 5. 17.

Events subsequent to the Appearing. The Church's further destiny is—

(1) *Millennial Glory* in which she is associated with Christ in universal rule, Rev. 20. 4-6 (Vision, 4—Parenthesis, 5a—Interpretation, 5b-6) ; Acts 17. 31 ; 1 Cor. 6. 2 ; Rev. 2. 26, 27 ; 5. 10 (lit. "over the earth"). The Church is both a recipient and a reflector of divine glory, presenting unfading beauty and shedding inconceivable brightness over the millennial scene, Rev. 21. 23, 24 (R.V. margin) ; cf. verse 11.

(2) *Eternal Glory* in which the Church is still seen in eternal youth and bridal splendour unchanged after one thousand years, Rev. 21. 2 (eternal state) with verse 9ff (millennial state). As to the eternal state Rev. 21. 1-8 should be closely studied, also 1 Cor. 15. 24-28 ; Eph. 3. 21 ; 2 Pet. 3. 13. The glory of heaven for every believer may be summed up in four terse phrases all connected with our Saviour : (a) *See Him*, 1 Jn. 3. 2 ; Rev. 22. 4 ; (b) *With Him*, 1 Thess. 4. 17 ; (c) *Like Him*, 1 Jn. 3. 2 ; (d) *Serve Him*, Rev. 22. 3.

CHAPTER 13.

WOMAN'S SPHERE AND SERVICE

To gather the mind of God on this subject it is necessary first to consider woman's origin.

CREATION ORDER. Gen. 1. 27, 28 ; 2. 18-25. In His eternal counsels God ever had before Him the glory of His beloved

Son. This included the provision of a consort wholly suited by grace to be for ever in joyful fellowship with Him as the Christ, a suited vehicle for the display of divine wisdom in time (Eph. 3. 10, 11), and divine grace in eternity (Eph. 2. 7). God's order in creation must be viewed in the light of this planned union of Christ and the Church, Eph. 3. 3-11 ; Col. 1. 26, 27. In relation to God the woman was "created," Gen. 1. 27 ; in relation to man she was "made" (lit. builded) from his side, Gen. 2. 22. Verse 20 has profound significance when considered in its context. God took evident delight in His creature-man's exercise of divinely-bestowed wisdom in naming beast and bird, but there was a deeper purpose in the act. It was demonstrated to Adam that his being was of an entirely different order and that among all the other creatures there was no true counterpart "answering" to him. The words "was not found" imply an unsuccessful quest. It seems clear that the Creator in consultation with Adam showed him that a suited consort could come only from his own body. The man's willing response as a free agent was to offer himself for the operation necessary to produce his bride. This not only adds force to verses 23, 24, but answers more closely to the wonderful antitype of Christ and the Church, Eph. 5. 25-32. It is evident that the Creator never intended woman to be in the place of independence. Her position, however, is not one of inferiority but of a unique dignity as representing the Church's relationship to Christ, a position to be worthily sustained according to divine arrangement, Prov. 31. 10-31. Without the woman man is incomplete and the divine purposes for him frustrated 1 Cor. 11. 3 ; study context to verse 12.

The Fall did not alter the relative position between the man and the woman, but the effects upon the latter are stated in Gen. 3. 16 ; (a) suffering in childbirth, and (b) subjection to husband. Headship had been vested in the man before, but now the subjection of the woman was a matter of command rather than of her spontaneous attitude. Modern teaching and practice have largely overturned God's order resulting in much of the confusion seen in present-day society, 1 Cor. 11. 3.

Matrimony is according to divine arrangement, Gen. 2. 24, endorsed by our Lord, Matt. 19. 3-6 ; Jn. 2. 1, 2 ; cf. Heb. 13. 4 ; cf. the implied rebuke against forbidding it, 1 Tim. 4. 3. Divorce was never intended by God and modern practice in regard to this is another cause of the sad state into which society had drifted in these last days. Scripture teaching on the subject will be found, Matt. 5. 31, 32 ; 19. 7-12 ; Mk. 10. 2-12 ; Lk. 16. 18 ; Rom. 7. 1-3 ; 1 Cor. 7, etc. In periods of special distress, such as open persecution of the Church, it may be expedient to refrain from, or postpone, marriage for a time in order to lessen the dangers and difficulties, 1 Cor. 7. 26-31. Then there are cases where servants of the Lord will suffer less distraction by remaining free from family ties (e.g. pioneer missionary work in unexplored territory) 1 Cor. 7. 32-35 with Matt. 19. 12. Paul himself was probably such an one ; 1 Cor. 9. 5 with 7. 8. Marriage has definite commitments and the N.T. by precept and example instructs in the respective duties of husband

and wife, 1 Cor. 7 ; Eph. 5. 22-33 ; Col. 3. 18, 19 ; 1 Pet. 3. 1-7. In proper subjection to her husband, the Christian woman should be an example to the world, not an imitator of the world.

The Home is woman's own special sphere. 1 Tim. 5. 14 speaks of her as being the "house-ruler" (not husband-ruler). Her aim is to make the house into a home and this can only be done where love is. She is to be "husband-lover" and "children-lover" (lit. Gk.), discreet, chaste, good (i.e. beautiful in character) and a *home-worker*, Tit. 2. 4, 5. Income is mostly the husband's earning but much of the responsibility for expenditure is the wife's, who has to decide between necessities and luxuries, with conveniences in the middle place! The training of the children especially in earlier years, lies chiefly with the mother. This is a privilege of the highest order and a solemn duty not to be neglected. Lack of well-ordered homes is one of the factors responsible for the incidence of juvenile delinquency to-day.

Adornment. The Fall brought a change from the primeval condition, Gen. 2. 25. The attempt of the guilty pair to cover their shame proved a failure, Gen. 3. 7, 8. God in grace provided for their recognised need by the blood-shedding of a substitutionary victim, 3. 21, a foreshadowing of the redemptive work of Christ. Clothing is striking evidence of sin in the human race. Animals have no such self-consciousness. The Mosaic law enjoined a distinction between the attire of men and of women, Deu. 22. 5, and the words in the latter part of the verse imply that it is an abiding principle. Christian women are instructed to wear apparel that is "seemly (lit. orderly) with modesty and discretion." Neither immodest dress nor slovenly attire commends the gospel. There is to be no ostentation or extravagance—she is to be approved by good deeds not by gay dress, by consistent works not by costly wrappings, 1 Tim. 2. 9, 10. God looks upon the heart not on the outward appearance, 1 Sam. 16. 7. This should encourage sisters who do not possess beauty of features and form. A meek and quiet spirit is precious in God's sight and therefore should be highly esteemed by Christians. Men of the world may be attracted by the artificial styles of fashion, but these are "corruptible" and soon to pass away, 1 Pet. 3. 3, 4 ; 1 Jn. 2. 15-17 ; Rom 12. 2. This does not rule out certain adjustments necessary for health and comfort in various climates, but conspicuousness is to be avoided whether in new fashions or old. As to "beauty aids" the only woman in Scripture mentioned as using them is Jezebel, an unenviable character surely for Christian sisters to follow, 1 Kg. 9. 30 ; cf. the prophets' scathing denunciation, Jer. 4. 30 ; Ezk. 23. 40. As to the hair, this was designed of God to mark the distinction between the sexes, 1 Cor. 11. 14, 15. Long hair is woman's glory, therefore such practices as bobbing, shingling and cropping in concession to passing fashion is not well-pleasing to the Lord, 1 Cor. 10. 31. Trimming for health reasons may be advisable on occasion provided this is done with a clear conscience before God and is not offered in excuse. Woman is to be truly feminine not masculine. Both nature and revelation reprehend

a woman with shorn head, 1 Cor. 11. 6, 15. Many modern fashions and practices are really in revolt against the Creator's prescribed arrangement.

REDEMPTION ORDER. In this there is no distinction of sex, Gal. 3. 28. All believers are alike in Christ Jesus—in Christ a new creation, 11 Cor. 5. 17. All are partakers of the heavenly calling, Heb. 3. 1, and all equally share the privileges of the Christian priesthood, 1 Pet. 2. 5, 9; see Lesson 6. This standing before God, however, must not be confounded with the present church order.

CHURCH ORDER is to maintain a testimony before angels (1 Cor. 11. 10; Eph. 3. 10, 11) and before men, 1 Cor. 14. 23-25. In the assembly the creation order still holds, 1 Cor. 14. 34, 35; 1 Tim. 2. 11, 12, the reasons being stated, (a) man's priority in his creation by God, cf. 1 Cor. 11. 2, 8, 9. (b) woman's frailty in her deception by Satan, 13, 14. Leadership is vested in the brethren in all assembly gatherings and among mixed audiences. This refers to both teaching and audible praying, 1 Tim. 2. 8, 12; "the men (lit males) . . . in every place." A gracious promise follows in verse 15. There would appear to be no restriction placed upon sisters speaking and praying in gatherings for women or children provided only that the injunction as to head-covering be observed in accordance with 1 Cor. 11. 2-16. Many women have natural ability for speaking, but neither this nor modern practice in certain "churches" warrants disobedience to the Word of God, however plausible the arguments. Apparent blessing upon such efforts is no safe guide, Matt. 7. 21-23; 2 Cor. 5. 9. We need ever to be on guard against the "spirit of the age," Eph. 2. 2. Satan is always working to subvert the divine order, but his defeat is assured and his doom imminent.

MINISTRY. Christian women have a wide sphere of ministry in activities for which they are particularly suited. As a member of the Body of Christ, the Church, each has her function to perform for the edification of the whole, 1 Cor. 12. 7. 12 ff. Most wives and mothers will find their time chiefly occupied with home duties. A well-ordered Christian household is a most powerful testimony for God in any neighbourhood. Experienced missionaries in pagan lands can testify to this fact. Elderly women, widows and unmarried sisters may have more opportunity to engage in outside work such as a Sunday School class, visitation of the sick and sorrowing, tract distribution, helping the singing in open-air testimony, women's gatherings and personal work among neighbours. Elderly sisters are enjoined to teach the younger, Tit. 2. 3, 4; and we have an example of a sister in the home sharing in the enlightenment of a brother not so well instructed, Acts 18. 26. Especially if they are wives of elders, they may be able to render valuable assistance in undertaking investigations among womenfolk on behalf of the assembly, and perform other service, provided always they possess the necessary qualifications, which are, "grave, not slanderers (lit. diaboloi, i.e. not allowing themselves to become the tool of the devil—the slanderer—diabolos), temperate (abstinent and circum-

spect), and faithful in all things (i.e. in carrying out any assigned duties)," cf. Tit. 2. 3. In the showing of hospitality to servants of God, to other visiting saints and to lonely Christians, especially young believers from ungodly homes, the wife obviously has the greater share, 1 Tim. 3. 2 ; 5. 10 ; Tit. 1. 8 ; Rom. 12. 13 ; Heb. 13. 2 ; 1 Pet. 4. 9 ; example, Acts 16. 15, 40. Christian doctors, nurses and school teachers have an exceptional field to witness and to work for the Lord. Examples of other forms of service are found, Matt. 27. 55 ; Mk. 12. 41-44 ; 15. 41 ; Lk. 8. 3 ; Rom. 16. 1 ; Acts 9. 36-39. In practice Christian women have often proved most generous givers. The Scriptures afford many examples of women who displayed strong faith and rendered devoted service to God. Among God's list of "honourable mentions" in Heb. 11, we find named and unnamed women. Many a dear sister in Christ, little noticed in the world, will surely meet in a coming day the approving word of the Lord, "She hath done what she could," Mk. 14. 8.

MISUNDERSTOOD SCRIPTURES.

It would appear well to consider some of the passages advanced in support of the public ministry of Christian women by those who wish to introduce this unscriptural practice.

(1) 1 Cor. 14. 34, 35. The prohibition here is said to refer to "chattering" in the assembly gatherings. The Greek verb used occurs frequently in the N.T. but never in the sense of "to chatter." In this very chapter it appears 24 times, 22 times clearly relating to ministry. Let the student attempt to substitute the word "chatter" in any of these and he will immediately perceive the resulting absurdity, verse 29, for instance ! Besides, would not the chattering of men be equally reprehensible ? Why the restriction upon sisters only ?

(2) Acts 21. 9, 10 incidentally mentions that the four daughters of Philip the evangelist had the prophetic gift. There are no prophets now (see Lesson 9) so that in any case this affords no example for the present. The only women claiming the prophetic gift in modern times have been mostly connected with error cults, like Mrs. Baker Eddy of "Christian Science," Mrs. Ellen White of "Seventh-Day Adventism" and not a few others. Note that Philip's daughters are not said to have exercised their gift in public. Then observe that when a prophetic message is to be delivered concerning Paul, the Lord sends His servant Agabus all the way from Judaea instead of using Philip's daughters, who were already on the spot. Surely this is significant enough !

(3) Phil. 4. 3. Euodia and Syntyche laboured with Paul in the gospel, but it is unwarrantable assumption to suggest that they preached publicly. As we have seen, there are many ways in which sisters can co-operate in the Lord's work apart altogether from speaking.

(4) Jhn. 4. 28-30, 42. Three things must be noted here ; (a) The Samaritan woman's audience was "the men," i.e. those with whom

she was acquainted and possibly had had unholy relations, hence must have been of a private nature ; (b) hers was a simple testimony not a public proclamation, 39 ; (c) she issued an invitation, " come," a suggestive form of service for Christian sisters to-day.

(5) *Acts* 1. 14. It is not to be inferred that the women prayed audibly. The order of the words indicates simply that they were present. Had the statement been, " These all, with the women continued steadfastly in prayer," there would be some measure of ambiguity. As it is the meaning is clear.

(6) *Jdgs.* 4. 4-9. Advocates of women's public ministry must be hard put to it when they turn to such an O.T. passage ! There is no inconsistency even here, but rather a warning example. Rulers had ceased in Israel (5. 7), showing that all was in confusion in the nation instead of divine order. Deborah took over the civil rule for lack of a man willing and able to do it. Barak was the military leader but so weak and fearful that when an emergency arose he called upon Deborah to share the post of danger with him despite her warning, 9. The incident shows utter weakness and failure among God's people. It was not an accession of new power and spirituality. Brethren who would introduce the public ministry of sisters thereby expose Barak-like qualities and augment sad failure in the church. Heb. 11. 32 mentions Barak not Deborah, thus upholding the divine principle that where men and women are in association even in weakness, leadership belongs to the man.

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